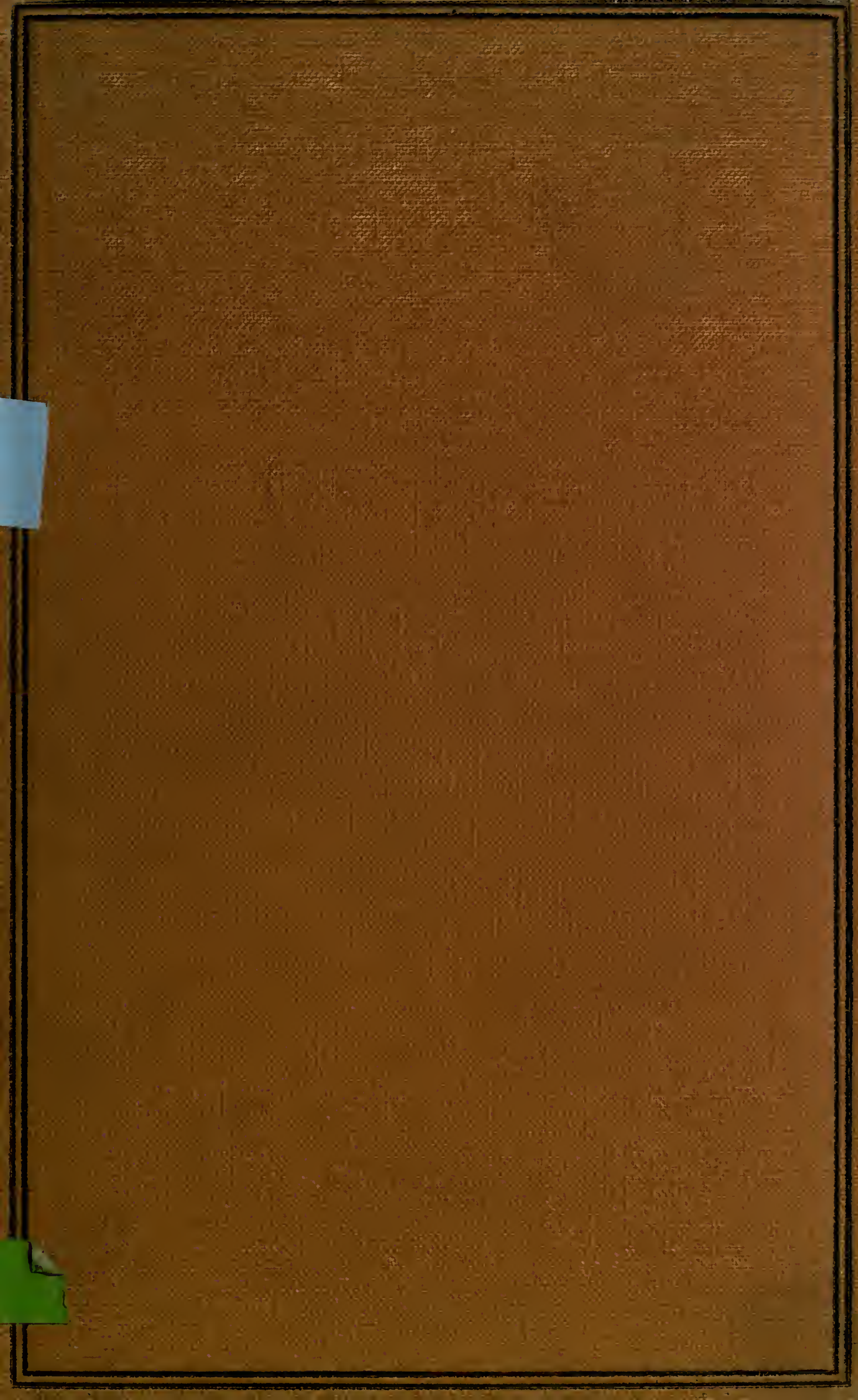

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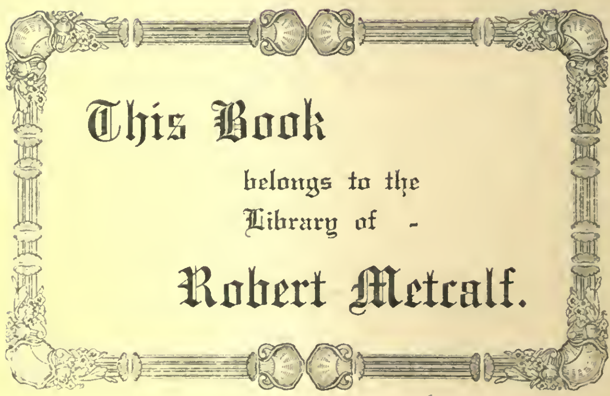

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Whimsical Walker in private life
at 71 years of age

FROM SAWDUST TO WINDSOR CASTLE

BY

" WHIMSICAL WALKER "

(The famous Drury Lane Clown)

With eight full page half-tone illustrations

LONDON:

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From Sawdust to Windsor Castle

CHAPTER I

My father and mother. My mother dies and my father marries again. A bad time with stepmother. When nine years old I run away. My first "engagement." Odd experiences. I try to be a photographer and come to grief. Another engagement—"A living head without a body." With Bedell's show at Whitby. My first "panto" part. How I got to London. I make the acquaintance of Morris Abrahams, who sends me home. Am engaged by Pablo Fangue, the circus proprietor. My training. Thanks to my face I am made a clown. Pablo Fangue an admirable master.

I WAS born in Hull in the year—well, it doesn't much matter what year it was. My mother kept a public house in Paragon Street with the odd name of the "March of Intellect," and it happened that Cooke's Circus, of which Robert Stanley Walker was manager, came to the theatre. Robert Walker fell in love with the hostess of the "March of Intellect," married her, and so I was brought into the world.

I was three years old and my sister Rachel one year and three months younger, when my mother was taken ill. She was ordered to Torquay, where she died. Five years later my father married again, and giving up circus life became proprietor of Castle Farm, Mile End, Hazel Grove, Stockport.

At Castle Farm were cows, pigs, a horse, fowls, etc., and the familiarity with animals which afterwards served me in such good stead in later life began here. Something else must also have begun—my "whimsicality," only it wasn't called by that name. I must have been a wrong-headed urchin, always going my own way in preference to other people's. Anyway, according to my stepmother, I could do nothing right; thrashings followed, and young as I was—only nine years—I made up my mind to run away.

One day I was sent with my stepmother's mother to Stockport market to sell butter and eggs, and was left by her in charge of the stall. Here was the very chance and I took it. I sold the stock on my own account and went off with the money to Manchester.

The showman's spirit must have been in my blood, for instinctively I turned towards Knott Mill Fair which was being held just off Deansgate. I chummed on with a boy I met; I treated him to hot peas, gingerbread and nuts until I was stony broke. My new friend was a lad of resource and introduced me to the proprietor of a tumbling booth who must have seen something funny in my face (I doubt if it was a lovely one) which took his fancy. "Put on some togs," said he, "knock about on the front of the booth and let me see how you get on."

It was my first engagement! My salary was plenty to eat, lodging and a penny or twopence a week. It wasn't much, but I felt independent, and I tried to forget I had a father of whom I was horribly afraid.

Rigged up in comic clothes, my performance was to tumble about in any way I fancied. I suppose I must have been unconsciously "whimsical," for the crowd laughed, and what was more to the purpose, so also did the show people.

I made a start at acrobatic training with the assistance of a broomstick, trying to bend back until my head touched my heels, but this did not suit my youthful fancy, and my ideas of a salary enlarging, I threw up my "engagement" at the tumbling booth and took up with a travelling photographer who gave me two shillings a week and my board, but as I had to pay for my bed I didn't get much out of it.

Looking back, it puzzles me how a photographer could find a boy of nine or ten useful. For my duties were to talk to the gaping multitude and induce them to have their portraits taken! I suppose I was a "hit" or he wouldn't have kept me on. I can only put it down to my innate "whimsicality."

I had odd experiences with the photographer. Once a hurricane blew the whole show over. The proprietor flew into a passion, said it was my fault and was for "firing" me right away, but altering his mind he gave me some lessons in photography, and leaving me in charge, went off to find a "pitch" in another town.

I suppose I imagined I was a full-blown artist, and a woman with her baby coming along, I induced her to give me a sitting and sent her away with an awful production for which I charged

her eighteenpence. The next day her husband descended upon me in the shape of a burly drunken collier who threatened to kill me unless I returned the money. Unluckily I'd spent it, but I pacified him by offering to take the lady and baby again. He vanished into a public house, and deciding that art was not my vocation, I fled and left the booth to its own devices. What became of it I never knew.

Ashton Fair was on and here I presented myself and was recognised by a showman named Randal Williams. Williams wanted a boy to play a part called " A living head without a body," a sort of trick which anticipated a portion of Maskelyne and Cooke's well-known entertainment years after. All I had to do was to put on a wig and old whiskers and go underneath the stage about a dozen times a day, and at a given signal put my head through a small trap door, my body of course being concealed. The exhibitor would then say, " Open your eyes—can you see ? " " Yes," was my reply. " Turn your eyes to the right—now to the left. Smoke a cigarette," etc.

One day some mischievous urchin stuck a pin into my body. I dived down to punch the young rascal. It was the critical moment of the show and when the trap opened there was no head ! The audience thought they had been swindled and went for the proprietor who went for me. That was the end of my " living head " engagement.

I then joined a hanky-panky show of conjurors. With my face blackened I was called " Jumbo "—the recognised name in those days

for a comic nigger. I imagine I then "found" myself. I certainly was a huge success and suddenly became the greatest boy on the parade. By the time we reached Whitby in the winter of that year I had mastered the mysteries of conjuring.

At Whitby Mrs. Bedell, the proprietress, rented a ramshackle structure dubbed the "Theatre Royal," which let in the rain to such an extent that sometimes there were two or three feet of water under the stage. We opened three nights a week with the "legitimate," "Maria Martin," "East Lynne," etc., and we also produced a pantomime, "The Babes in the Wood." I was one of the "Babes" and Polly Bedell, Mrs. Bedell's daughter, the other; and the scene painter was the clown, Billy Baker, who also made the properties.

One wet night a dreadful fiasco came about. In the last scene the two little dears ascended to Heaven after being covered with leaves (which we collected every morning from the country) by the dear little robins, one of which, by the way, was a huge "property" bird that became a codfish in the harlequinade. On this particular night the box containing the babes was ascending to Heaven when one of the ropes broke and exit the babes under the stage into a watery grave! That was the end of the panto.

Young as I was I noticed that a company of strolling players always had its "character." Bedell's "character" was the cornet player, Stokes, who comprised the entire orchestra. He had a wooden tooth and he could only play when

this tooth was in his mouth, and as he sometimes mislaid it there was an element of uncertainty in his performance, which lent it considerable charm.

The time came when I got tired of Bedell's, and a friendly fisherman who had a son about my own age suggested that we should go to sea together. It was winter time and I didn't much relish the idea. However, I sailed with him in his smack to London, and when I was in the crowded streets the old yearning for show life came back, and I said good-bye to my friend the fisherman.

What I did in London for some little time I don't exactly remember, but one day who should I come across but an acrobatic troupe, the Carlos Brothers, whom I had met at Manchester Fair and who—thanks I believe to my "whimsical" face—remembered me. They were showing at the Effingham Saloon (now called "Wonderland"), Mile End Road, built by Morris Abrahams, who was also running the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel Road.

It was a very miscellaneous entertainment that Morris Abrahams provided for his patrons of the Effingham. Sometimes it was lurid melodrama of the old "Vic" type and sometimes it was a variety show. Something of the latter kind was being run when the Carlos Brothers were engaged. My recollections of the Whitechapel and Mile End Roads of the early sixties are quite distinct. The very wide thoroughfare, probably the finest approach to the metropolis which London possesses, was still countrified in

some parts. There was ample room in front of many of the inns not only for waggons to draw up, but benches and tables, arranged in rows, for *al fresco* refreshments, and, clean and bright with the greenest of green paint, invited the weary traveller to sit and rest. Here on a fine evening could be seen working men and their wives enjoying themselves in modest fashion and taking their drink leisurely and in comfort, a thing impossible in these days of dirty four-ale bars. One never saw young girls take their beer or whisky as is too often the case now.

Tea gardens and dancing platforms flourished then. There was one favourite place of this kind on the opposite side of the Mile End Road to that where the Effingham was situated. It was called the Eagle, I think, and on its site the Paragon music hall was subsequently built. Mile End toll gate was then in existence and that queer quaint old public-house stuck almost in the centre of the road not far from the gate was a prominent and not unsightly object. It was in the winter when I was at the Effingham, so I did not see the glories of the Fairlop carnival and the fireworks let off in the road without any fear of police restrictions, which welcomed the return of the boats mounted on wheels from the fair at the Fairlop oak, Epping Forest.

To my boyish fancy a perpetual fair went on in the great stretch of no man's land—afterwards I believe called Mile End "Waste"—extending nearly a mile along the side of the Mile End Road. Penny shows, stalls where everything which no one could possibly want was sold, hosts of penny

merchants living on their wits—and most ingenious they were in tickling the fancy of the public—excited groups hotly discussing any topic which might be in the air at the time—it did not seem to matter much what—and above all, the Cheap Jack and his Dutch auction! The Cheap Jack with his glib tongue, ready wit, and unlimited stock of impudence, was a joy, and one could stand for an hour enjoying the fun and not spend a penny.

Unluckily I wasn't allowed these delights for long. Morris Abrahams had been a "pro" nearly all his life—I believe he came out as a dancer—and it happened that he knew my father, so that when I told him that I'd run away he wrote home. The sequel was the arrival the next day of a gentleman in a tall silk hat who announced that he was a detective and that he had come to take me back to my father.

So back I went, very down, and of course was received with black looks all round. Three days went over and my old "whimsicality" showing itself in the shape of letting the pigs loose into the flower garden, my father had the sense to see that the ruling passion was too strong, and Pablo Fangue's Circus chancing at the time to be at Stockport Fair, I was then and there sent to Fangue, engaged by him, and in this way my real professional life began.

Pablo Fangue, a coloured gentleman, was a thorough master of his profession, and I have to thank him for what I subsequently became—without vanity may I say it?—the greatest celebrity in my particular line in the circus

business. He taught me to ride, to tumble, to perform on the trapeze, to vault over horses, and indeed all the intricacies belonging to circus life. I must admit that I was not over good at riding—you see, my face was not too beautiful—so I was made a clown. I confess that I like clowning, as the audience often threw oranges and money into the ring when I made them laugh, as I often did.

Training for the circus meant much harder work than people may imagine. There were three boy apprentices besides myself, and a girl (Fanny Bluring). We boys had to get up at 6 o'clock every morning to look after the horses, breakfast was at 8, practice at 8.30, and school at 9, excepting when we were performing at fairs.

Pablo Fangue did his duty towards us very conscientiously and sent us to church on Sunday mornings. Of course, we preferred playing marbles, and to satisfy our master, who always asked us what the text was, we used to learn one by heart beforehand. Maybe the good words came too trippingly off our tongues and so excited his suspicions, and he caught us out by going unseen by us to the same church. That day at dinner he was unusually nice and said quite amicably, "Well, my boys, have you all been to church?" "Yes, sir," we chanted. "And was it a nice sermon?" "Oh, yes, sir." "And what were the words?" "Jesus wept." "Ah, and all of you will too"—and we did.

He certainly knew something about boys' ways, did Pablo Fangue. We used to have sundry threepenny and fourpenny pieces given to us

during the week, and clever little Fanny Bluring was our banker. All she had to do was to drop the little coins down the bag-like receptacle for the flat piece of wood in front of her old-fashioned stays, and there they remained in safety till we wanted them on Sunday, when we would gorge ourselves with icecreams, nuts, gingerbread, and anything we fancied. In Glasgow we spent no end of shillings with an ice cream merchant in the Saltmarket, and our master suspecting the reason why we couldn't eat any dinner conspired with the iceman. The next time we had ice creams—but I draw a veil over the sequel. For months after I could never face an ice cream.

I was with Pablo until he died. I was then fourteen and I fancy I knew more about animals than most boys of my age. I was entrusted to buy the hay for the horses; I acted as veterinary surgeon, I could tell when a horse was lame, when he was ill I knew what was the matter with him; and all this useful knowledge I must say I owe to Pablo Fangue. He was certainly one of the best of masters.

CHAPTER II

I tramp from Bristol to London with my properties. A one-day show with the "Retort" Circus at the Crystal Palace. The seats collapse. I join Croueste and Nella's Circus. A "double somersault over five horses by the Little Clown." An unexpected catastrophe. How I "performed" on the slack rope. With Powell and Clarke at Southampton. The preacher and the monkey. I appear at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, for a benefit at Sanger's Circus. A lion in my dressing room! Practical joking among circus lads. Am tired of circus life and go in for "mumming." I take an "engagement" at Royston's Circus at Carlisle. Playing "Little Willie" in "East Lynne" and the "ghost" in "Hamlet" under difficulties. Am disappointed with "mumming" and go back to the circus. My first shave. Terrible death of Macmart, the lion tamer.

On the death of Pablo Fangue his circus was sold and my life became one of strange ups and downs. Looking back, if all were related, that life would seem to be one of great hardship, but in reality I had seen much of the unexpected and had always tumbled on my feet, so nothing took me aback. Besides, I had the habit of discovering the funny side of things, and this was my salvation.

After Pablo Fangue's Circus changed hands, I joined John Powell's show at Bristol, but finding there was no money accepted an engagement with a circus called the "Retort" (spell the word backwards and you will find it is "Trotter") which was going to give a performance on Easter Monday at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham. I tramped it from Bristol to London, loaded with my properties—a dancing spade, a long pair of stilts, a short pair ditto and a little portmanteau.

The mistress of the circus was a Mrs. Bonfantie, and I looked her up on Easter Sunday at the Half Moon Hotel, Hammersmith, where she was staying. I was nearly bootless and with ten shillings she lent me I went off to the New Cut and bought a pair of patent leather shoes for 2/11½. Early on Easter Monday I set out to walk to the Crystal Palace. It rained all the way and by the time I reached the Palace my patent leathers had turned out to be brown paper and the soles had to be tied together with string. No matter, I went into the ring just the same.

The circus was in the grounds, and the tent was crowded, the people being glad of the shelter out of the pouring rain. The seats being soddened with wet, the audience stood upon them, the supports slipped in the soft, muddy ground, and then the seats collapsed. The scared crowd rushed into the arena and I in my clown's dress got considerably mixed up. That was the last of Trotters' Circus so far as I was concerned—only one day.

In those happy-go-lucky times nothing seemed to matter. Some money was due to me from Trotters', and their lawyer called at the coffee

house, Westminster Bridge Road, where I had put up, and paid me a bright golden sovereign. I owed for my board and lodging and also for a washing bill. Which should I pay? "Toss up," said Johnny Purvis, my pal. We stood under a lamp post (it was night). I tossed, muffed it and it disappeared into the gutter! It was an agonising moment. Anyhow, we found the coin, but whether we paid the coffee house or the washing I can't remember.

The next few years was a jumble of odd experiences. Once I was with Croueste and Nella's Circus at Blackburn. Business was very bad, so the proprietor of the circus asked me if I would do a double somersault over the horses as he thought that would bring a good house, and I agreed to do so after I'd had some practice. Bills were printed with the announcement in large type: "Greatest wonder in the World! The Little Clown will turn a double somersault in mid-air over five horses before alighting on his feet." We only had three horses, but that didn't matter. The night came off for this wonderful feat. The house was packed. I had practised the double somersault about half a dozen times and had got on all right. However, I suppose on the night I was over excited. I hit the vaulting board a terrific thump, and I went up in the air. How many somersaults I turned I don't know, but my head came down on the ring fence and broke it (the fence, I mean). I got up, smiled, and they led me out of the ring. I was bad for about three weeks, and I never tried that game again.

I remember another unexpected accident at

the same circus. A performer on the slack rope had been engaged and we boys at practice in the morning thought we would try this trick. I was wearing little top boots and I put on a pair of what we call " slings "—fastenings which, attached to the ropes, enabled the performer to attempt certain feats without the risk of falling—round my top boots. The boys gave the rope a good swing and I started doing somersaults. thinking I couldn't fall as I had the slings on. " Try the ' throw out,' " shouted my pals below—that is, whirl myself head downwards. I did try, and to my horror I came out of my top boots and went crash down. Luckily, I fell on the seats, and I got up without even a scratch on me. Meanwhile, my top boots were dangling in the air, and just as I was going to get them my master came in and said, " What's this ? " I told him what I had done. Result—a lovely hiding for trying to do another man out of his performance. That taught me a lesson !

While I was with Croueste and Nella two things happened on the same day which fixed themselves on my memory. One was not of much importance, the other was a terrible business. The circus was at Bolton, and by this time I was getting on in my teens and had begun to fancy myself considerably. I saw myself a full-blown " pro " and had visions of an overcoat with an astrachan collar, wide bell-bottomed trousers, my hat stuck on one side, and with all the airs which the budding actor then affected. I was well satisfied with my general appearance save in one respect. I could not grow a moustache and this made me look younger than I really was.

The great drawback of my youthful aspect in my eyes was that the girls took no notice of me. All my circus pals of my own age could get sweethearts without any difficulty, but never a one had I. I persuaded myself or my friends persuaded me that the cause was the absence of hair on my face. They worked zealously on my behalf, but whether this zeal was genuine I have now reason to doubt, though I thought it was all right at the time.

To begin with they got some stuff from a druggist which I had to rub on my face. I rubbed and rubbed, but nothing came of it. Then Joe Smith, one of the circus men, said to me, " Why don't you go and get shaved ? "

" What's the good ? " said I, " there's so little to shave."

" That's nothing to do with it. The more your face is scraped the quicker your moustache will grow."

Acting on the advice of this authority I paid a visit to a Bolton barber. His charge was not high, it was only a halfpenny. Plucking up my courage I went into the dirty little barber's shop, looking round before entering to see if anyone was seeing me going in. I saw a miserable old man about 80, and directly he caught sight of me he called out roughly, " What do you want ?" and I told him. He got a filthy dirty towel and put it round my neck, and I began to feel horribly nervous. I'd been reading about Sweeney Tod, the barber of Fleet Street, and I wished I was out of the shop. He got the brush (I will never forget the brush—if you call it a brush) and he put some stuff on the

brush supposed to be soap (I don't know what it was). He was very shortsighted and he lathered my face, not forgetting my eyes, my nostrils and my mouth.

After scrubbing my face for a minute or two he turned round and began stropping a razor, accompanied by a loud muttering, which I thought sounded like "N—ow ———ow!" Maybe it was his cough—anyhow to me he was Sweeney Todd! In a flash I was out of the chair—through the door and running down the streets with the soap stuff on my face, scraping it out of my eyes, out of my nostrils, spitting it out of my mouth, and I ran till I became exhausted. At the show (it was a penny circus, by the way) Joe Smith enquired anxiously whether I'd had a shave yet. "No," said I stoutly, "and I don't want one." Nor did I. So much for the unimportant event of that night.

Bolton Fair was on and later, when the various shows were closing we heard a frightful screaming. It was then nearly eleven o'clock. We rushed out of the circus on to the fair ground and saw a crowd pouring from Mander's menagerie shrieking with terror. Feeling that some dreadful disaster had happened we ran up the steps to the entrance and into the menagerie.

Our fears were too truly realised. A terrible tragedy met our eyes. The lion tamer, Mr. Macmart, was being worried and mauled by his lions. He had been giving a sort of extra show after the ordinary public performance was over, to amuse a party of students, and no red-hot irons were handy. What had happened was this:

One of Mr. Macmart's tricks was for the lioness to lie at his feet while he put his foot on one of the lions. By a great mischance he stumbled over the lioness and fell, and directly he was on the ground the lions leaped at him.

I shall never forget to my dying day the terrible scene. One beast was at the poor man's head and the other at his feet, roaring and snarling like two dogs over a bone—it was frightful. We fired revolvers with blank cartridges, hoping to make them desist, but it was in vain. However, at last we got him out by dividing the cage into three parts by the shutters provided for the purpose, but it was too late, the poor fellow died within twenty minutes. He was an Irishman with one arm and for some reason the lion probably had taken a dislike to him, as a few years before the same creature attacked him and so injured his arm that it had to be amputated.

Among other engagements in my teens was one with Powell and Clarke's Circus, during which time the Southampton Circus was let to a preacher, for Sunday service. It so happened that young Powell had just bought a reece monkey off a sailor, and on a certain Sunday morning, when the circus was crowded to hear a noted preacher, the monkey got loose and crept very gently to where the reverend gentleman was. There was no viciousness in the monkey, but he just pulled the reverend gentleman's trouser leg. The clergyman naturally turned to see the cause, dropped the hymn book as though it were red-hot, and with one jump was across that ring and through the stable door quicker than I can tell you, his flock

scooting after him. That finished the preaching in the circus.

Some time after this, when I was at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, Mr. Levy, the manager of Sanger's Circus in Deansgate, asked me if I would appear for his benefit, and I got permission from my manager to do so. The night came. I did my clown's business and after I had finished I returned to my dressing room. I was just undressing, when I heard the door locked, and the next moment I saw something move in the distance in the corner of my dark dressing room. It was one of the lions. I was so frightened that I lost speech. I made myself as little as I could and did a bit of horizontal bar on the rafters, and after being there about ten minutes, the door was unlocked. It was just a practical joke and I think the lion was more alarmed than even I was. It took about three or four men to shove him out: he was so old, poor old dear! This poor lion was as docile as a kitten, but I was not supposed to know that!

Some sort of joking was always going on among the boys. I remember once at Astley's we let four of the lions loose one evening for a lark. It was more of a lark than we had bargained for. Lions wanted catching in a large place like that—and at the last we had to beg Cooper, the lion tamer, to get them back in their cage.

Another practical joke and I come to the end of my boyish "whimsicalities."

There was a clown once with Adams' Circus called Nat Emmatt, and he had a performing goat. Nat was always very nasty to us boys, was always

getting us in trouble, and we determined to get our own back. On one occasion Emmatt was in the ring and his goat was waiting at the wing doors to go in the arena. Now this goat had a funny little tail, and we tied a halfpenny squib to the excrescence, set the squib alight and sent him in the arena. The antics that goat performed with "bang, bang" going at his latter end, and the fury of Nat Emmatt, sent the audience into convulsions. Of course, they thought it was part of the show. A reward was offered to find out who frightened the goat, but the culprit was never discovered.

Summing up my young days, I can honestly say that in spite of its hardships the circus life of yore had its attractions. The travelling from town to town, the buzz, the din, the excitement of fairs, the admiration and wonder of the gaping rustics, the jovial meetings of old chums, the comparison of experiences, were delights which don't exist in these days. What a pride it was to herald the coming of a circus by a procession through some sleepy country town, the company in full dress, the wild animals staring with all their eyes, the band blaring and banging its loudest, boxed up in a sort of triumphal car of gold and scarlet, and strongly reminding one of the gigantic trophies of gingerbread on the fair stalls!

Then there were the catastrophes, which were bound to occur even in the best regulated shows, and the expedients to be thought out at a moment's notice to overcome them—the chances whether expenses were going to be paid or not—the vagaries

of the weather—the bad or good temper as the case might be of the proprietor! All was delightfully uncertain; sometimes disappointing, sometimes exhilarating, but one thing was never absent—the sense of freedom—and so long as we pleased our audiences our mission of life was fulfilled.

For a long time it seemed as though I was glued to travelling circus life. Yet I had dreams that some day I should do something better. I had wild ideas of becoming an actor, but at the moment when I was clowning in the ring and earning my name of "Whimsical" Walker there didn't seem the ghost of a chance of these ideas ever being realised.

Those days were not these days when actors and actresses without any training suddenly jump into notoriety (for a time) so long as they have some link with "Society." Their reputation is established when the illustrated papers deem them of sufficient importance to photograph them playing with their pet dogs in their back gardens, or when they get themselves talked about through some eccentricity of conduct—outside the theatre. Hard work, talent, study of the histrionic art, appear now-a-days to be the last things necessary to success. It is too often a question of self-advertisement.

It was not so during the period of which I am writing, and of course, earlier. The would-be actor and actress without any qualification beyond vanity and ambition and maybe influence and money, had not a look-in. The old managers would have turned up their noses at such presumption. You had to begin at the beginning

and know your profession from A to Z before you were regarded seriously.

What did that queer showman Richardson say of Macready, who, though the son of a theatrical manager, had not gone through the drudgery of mumming at a fair? When the great actor was well known Richardson was asked if he had ever seen him. "No, master," was the blunt answer. "I knows nothing about him; in fact, he's some wagabone as nobody knows—one o' them chaps as ain't had any eddication for the thing. He never was with me as Edmund Kean an' them Riglars was." Many of "them Riglars," afterwards famous in their day, from Henry Irving downwards, if they didn't start with the immortal Richardson, commenced their career in some acting booth of very much the same character.

So, I repeat, there was just the possibility of fame for me if I stuck at what I was doing. But this is just what I didn't do—at least for a time. I was nearly out of my teens when after all kinds of circus ups and downs, picking up bits of knowledge that came in useful subsequently, I decided to become an actor! The life looked easier. Being on a walking tour—not from choice, but for the simple reason that I wasn't able to comply with the slight formality which had to be gone through with the booking clerk at the railway station before they would permit me to ride—I eventually arrived at Carlisle and found myself with Royston's Temple of the Drama, otherwise Royston's Mumming Booth.

I was in time to lend a hand with the tilt, and with aid of a hammer and a few tacks we had it

erected in readiness for the evening performance. I smiled at the manager, expecting some slight recompense for my exertions, but all he said was:

"Laddie, you have helped us out of a great hole; I will repay you; you shall to-night play 'Little Willie' in 'East Lynne,' and in the second part you shall play the ghost in 'Hamlet'—and do your spade dance in the graveyard scene."

I pointed out to him that I knew neither of the parts.

He said, "You can read."

I admitted the fact.

"Good—we have a doll in the bed for the dying scene in 'East Lynne'—you will be underneath and read the part. As the 'Ghost' you will read from the part which you will carry as a baton. Don't you worry, I'll make a first-class actor of you yet."

I thanked him and asked him about money. He gazed at me as if I had suddenly told him the Home Secretary would hold him out no hope of a reprieve.

"Money, money," he gasped. "You won't need money—you'll live on the fat of the land; the audience will present you with eggs—cabbages—carrots!"

He was right!! They did!! It was a repetition of the old time days in Ireland when the audiences paid for their admission in kind.

When on the Saturday night a settlement had to be arrived at, I joined with the other performers round the drum. My share came to the magnificent sum of 9½d. I was about to gather

up my hard-earned money when a man appeared saying he wanted the ground rent, and my ninepence went towards making up the amount!

After this experience I returned to the circus life once more, and from Royston's I went to Footit's Circus, and we opened at Nottingham.

Of all the towns in England I think I liked Nottingham as well as any. The free-hearted factory lasses and chaps went mad over the circus, and I was always sure of raising a laugh whenever I wanted one. The audiences were out for pleasure and fun, and were not ashamed to show their feelings. I think of the Nottingham crowds who now fill the picture palaces, often as mum as mice, and wonder if they can laugh as heartily as they did in the days of Footit's Circus!

CHAPTER III

Am engaged at Astley's. The curious history of the theatre. Sanger's odd expedient against fire. I am a soldier for one night in "Fair Rosamond." Recreation at the "Bower Saloon." I play the part of a monk. The monks' revenge on an obnoxious actor. A fight with "Richard III." Am pitched into the orchestra. I join Adams' Circus in Yorkshire. I make Marwood, the hangman, laugh. Am an unsatisfactory witness in a police court case.

Sometime during 1873 I came to London and obtained an engagement at Astley's. Astley's was not the old circus of Ducrow and other "Ring" celebrities, but the transformed building, at least so far as the outside walls were concerned, of Mr. Dion Boucicault, who in 1863 rebuilt it with very highflown notions. He proposed to call the new theatre the "Westminster" and to devote it to the "legitimate" drama. The project came to grief hopelessly. The public refused to recognise the "Westminster," which wasn't in Westminster but in Lambeth. Astley's it always had been and Astley's it was to remain to the end of its days. The "legitimate" fled—to use the words of old Ducrow on one occasion—the "cackle" was "cut," and horses came into their own once more. But they did not reign

supreme, for that eccentric showman E. T. Smith, who was always out for something "original," tried the experiment in 1865 of combining a circus with opera! It was of course an utter failure.

Then Sanger's had their home there for a time, and during 1872 Lord George Sanger (who by the way laid the foundation of his fortune in a penny show with "Maria Martin") took the place on a lease from Mr. Batty and transmogrified the interior, opening with a pantomime at Christmas 1872. Mr. Boucicault's experiment had completely spoilt the theatre for circus purposes and Lord George Sanger restored the ring, re-arranged and re-decorated the auditorium, and "Astley's" was almost itself again, but with a difference. There was now a stage as well as a ring.

Sanger's did not forget to set forth the glories of the new home with the old name. "No; Astley's not gone to dust and ashes"—ran one advertisement affectionately. "We have come to the rescue—we have spent a fortune to restore the dear old place"—and this was no more than the sober truth. A singular contrivance to satisfy the public that Astley's would not be burnt down was the novel idea of turning the gas pipes into water pipes should there be any necessity for the transformation! "In case of emergency," ran the announcement, "any person by turning a lever will be able to convert the whole of the gas jets into water outlets." Lord George, however, did not reckon with his elephants. One of the huge beasts broke loose the day before the opening of the theatre, smashed a water main which supplied the gas-water pipes, and ruined the act

drop! The fashion of the day in circus titles—"William the Conqueror and the pretty white horse with the golden hoof"—was fairly well indicated by the title of the piece which formed the principal attraction.

But before a year was out Lord George Sanger discovered that his own name was quite as good for the public as was Astley's, and certainly more gratifying to himself. In the late autumn of 1873 he announced with a great flourish of trumpets the production of Mr. Akhurst's spectacular play, "Fair Rosamond, or the Days of the Plantagenets." Stories of the feudal times had apparently caught on with the public. Lord George Sanger was not one to hide his light under a bushel and he gave evidence of this in the following advertisement: "Sanger's Grand National Amphitheatre. Late Astley's. The proprietors do publicly challenge the entire profession to equal the exciting and effective scene of the Battle of Bridgenorth. Fifty trained horses in the great fight."

As for the spectacle itself, to go over the list fairly takes one's breath away. Here it is:

"The Landing of King Henry at Portsmouth, the Grand Procession at Winchester, Coronation in Westminster Abbey, the Great Battle of Bridgenorth, the Great Scene Morning after the Battle, the Bower at Woodstock, the Cloisters of Canterbury Cathedral, Interior of Canterbury Cathedral, Assassination of A'Beckett—with four other grand tableaux."

The names read beautifully and it seems almost a shame to spoil the effect by relating, as I shall

shortly have to do, an inglorious episode in which I took part.

The play was produced on November 1st, 1873, and preceded the Christmas pantomime. It was at Astley's in this very "Fair Rosamond" that, not discouraged by my failure at Royston's mumming booth, I made my second attempt to become a great actor. The play came on after the circus business, in which I had a share, was over. For arena purposes half the stage, which was adaptable, was removed, and restored when the drama came on. I had to play the part of a soldier, together with three others. We all wore beautiful armour. The words we had to say did not want much study. They comprised two only, "To Canterbury," in reply to our Captain's question, "Where goest thou?" uttered with all the haughtiness demanded by melodrama.

I was only a little chap at this time and my suit of armour had been made for a man quite six feet high. I'm not sure that I looked a very noble warrior; at all events the audience didn't think so, and the gallery and the pit yelled at me. Again I was a failure at serious acting and my second essay lasted one night only. Somehow I had the knack of always doing something wrong, and I fancy I often involved my three companions into scrapes, and unfortunately one of the actors named Lee made matters worse by telling tales of our misdoings to the stage manager. Lee was really a fine actor and I daresay our blunderings were a real source of annoyance to him.

Practically, so far as acting was concerned, we were given the sack, but this didn't quell the

dramatic ardour which possessed us, and we found solace, after our circus business was over, in visits to the "Bower" in Stangate, not far from Astley's.

The "Bower"—its full name was the "Bower Saloon," but no one ever thought of calling it so—was then falling into decay, but it was still struggling to maintain its reputation as the only rival to the "Vic" as a home of gory melodramas. Whatever the "Bower" may have looked like in its best days, it had now become grimy and shabby, and the audience was of the rowdiest. It probably would not hold many more than some 500 people. "Sweeney Todd" and "bluggy" plays of a like lurid character formed the staple bill of fare, and we were able to revel in gore comfortably seated in the royal box, for which we paid twopence a piece.

If I'd known as much about the "Bower" at that time as I've learned since I should probably have looked upon it with more interest and respect. It was in Stangate—a somewhat slummy street, swept away, I think, for the approaches of St. Thomas Hospital, and in Stangate close to the "Bower" once lived the father of the great Grimaldi. Mr. H. G. Hibbert in his "A Playgoer's Memories" reminds us that that erratic genius, Robson, commenced his career at the "Bower," and further points out a curious if remote connection between the "Bower" and the "Belle of New York." Musgrove, who produced this American musical play in London and made a fortune out of it, married a relative of the once popular Irish comedian George Hodson,

one of whose daughters was Miss Henrietta Hodson, who became the wife of Mr. Labouchere. George Hodson was at one time the manager of the "Bower" and thus supplied the chain which linked this sordid place of amusement with the bright and brilliant "Belle."

Our studies of the drama as it was presented at the "Bower" were eventually discovered, and the Astley manager expressed his displeasure—why, I couldn't understand, unless he thought the spectacle of murders (it was the murders which we really went to see) were corrupting our taste. Anyway he stalked into the "Bower" one night, and spotting us, enquired sternly what we were doing there. Our excuse that as we were not wanted on the Astley stage we had come to pick up what we could of acting at the "Bower" was not considered satisfactory, and we were bundled back to Astley's and given another chance as monks.

Now Mr. Lee played "Fair Rosamond's" father, and he had a fine tragic scene of which he made the most, especially in his death scene, where he was supposed to be shot through the heart by an arrow on the battlefield. Having a number of trained horses on the establishment it was not to be supposed a chance of producing a realistic effect would be lost sight of, so a whole batch of "gees" were brought on the stage and represented the dead and dying.

Our duty as monks was to pick up the body of Rosamond's father, place it on a bier and carry the latter round the battlefield among the defunct quadrupeds. We were longing to get our own

back on Lee, and one night as we were doing the usual mournful promenade to slow music one of the horses started kicking. Mr. Lee suspected the monks were at the bottom of the "certain liveliness," and I'm afraid he wasn't far wrong.

But this was only the preliminary to our plot. Before the next performance one of the handles attached to the bier was half sawn through, and it only wanted a little jerk to bring about a catastrophe. Sure enough that catastrophe arrived. Down fell the body; the audience yelled with delight and shouted for him to die again, much to Mr. Lee's disgust, because he knew full well that it was not his fine acting they wanted to see, but merely the collapse of the corpse. Another row with the stage manager followed, with the result that the monks were unfrocked and not allowed again to figure in "Fair Rosamond."

I was then tried as a Lancashire soldier in Richard III. I had to fight the King, who of course was mounted on "White Surrey." The horse that played the part was a very vicious brute, and when I saw him put his ears back and show his teeth I made sure he was going for me. I retreated, and backing a little too much, fell over the footlights on to a fiddler. That did it. I was fished out of the orchestra a very discomfited warrior, and this was the end of my acting career at Astley's.

My connection with Astley's abruptly terminating (I never appeared there again) I joined Adams' Circus, well known in those days in the various towns of Yorkshire. Off and on I was a member

of Adams' Company for a considerable time, and strictly speaking, the episodes I am about to relate did not take place until some years after my first engagement, but as I shall not have occasion to refer to Adams again, I insert them here.

We were at Leeds, the circus being stationed in Cudbright Street. Charles Peace had just been condemned, and Armley gaol, to which he had been consigned after his trial, being just outside Leeds, nothing else but the murderer and his extraordinary career was being talked about.

On this particular night Mr. Adams and I, after the performance, looked in at one of the hotels, and while we were there a gentleman sitting close by recognised Mr. Adams, and said he :

"I saw your show to-night and I knew you again. You were riding that beautiful Arab."

Mr. Adams said that was so, and the stranger went on :

"Who was that funny cuss who had some fits and performed on the high stilts ?"

Mr. Adams, pointing to me, said that I was the individual.

"I'm very pleased," was the rejoinder; "You made me laugh."

He handed me his card, which I didn't bother about, as cards were often forced upon me, but thrust it into my pocket. That night I stuck it with others on the mantelpiece in my room and went to bed. In the morning I looked at the card, and something like a shudder went over me when my eyes fell on the inscription "Marwood, Executioner." That very morning he executed Peace. It may sound absurd, but I could not eat any

breakfast, nor could I get the man out of my mind for weeks, for I had shaken hands with him!

By way of contrast to this gruesome memory I recall an odd incident which happened when Adams' Circus was at Bradford. The circus stood on the ground where is now the Midland Station, and I lived up the hill and every night had to pass the "Ring of Bells," where open house was kept, and where I was a welcome visitor. One night I looked in while a fearful row was going on between the landlord and a customer, a tailor. The row was terminated in summary fashion by the landlord kicking the tailor out of the house. The tailor retaliated by obtaining a summons for assault, and I found myself subpœnaed as a witness.

While we were waiting for the case to come off, and the time hanging heavy on our hands, plaintiff, defendant and witness went to the nearest hostelry. I became an object of special interest to both sides, and they stood treat very liberally. The result was that when we got back to the court and the case was called I was feeling unusually fit.

What happened was something like this. After the parties told their stories, which of course represented the affair in totally different lights, I was told to stand in front of the magistrate, which I did.

"What have you got to say about this case?" asked his worship.

"Nothing," said I.

"Well, what are you doing here then?"

"I don't know," was all I could think of saying.

Case dismissed!

But the witness hadn't finished distinguishing himself. As I was leaving the court I was passing

The best friend I ever had in the
Theatrical Profession

a form on which two or three policemen were sitting. I needn't say that I fell over this form and that the policemen fell with me. But nothing came of it—they knew who I was.

By the way, it may be of interest at the present time to note that those were days of amazing prosperity among the coal miners. Champagne was such a common drink that at Barnsley it was known as "colliers' pop." It was at Barnsley that I was invited to go down a coal mine. With my usual want of thought it never occurred to me that about the last costume one would select for such a visit was a light summer suit and hat to match. I needn't say that when I reappeared after my ramble down among the coals I looked fit to go to a funeral.

CHAPTER IV

A turning point in my career. I accept an offer to go to America and travel with John H. Murray's Railroad Circus. The discomforts of crossing the Atlantic. The adventures of a jar of whisky. Our opening show at Harlum a success. Blowing up "Hell Gate." New York scared. Odd experiences down south. An indignant darkie thirsts for my blood. The clown not understood in America. A Yankee who didn't like my "general appearance." A Pittsburg "burglar." I return to England.

WHILE at Sheffield there came a turning point to my career. I was still with Adams' Circus (perhaps I might mention that some little time before this I had got married) which had its "pitch" in Station Road, and a manager who happened to see me clowning came up to me after the performance and startled me by asking without any preface:

"How would you like to go to America?"

The question rather took my breath away and I stared blankly at him for a few moments. However, I had presence of mind enough to say:

"All right, if you make it worth my while. But you'll have to let me finish my engagement here."

He agreed to this, so I went that night to his hotel and we fixed the thing up, I signing a contract to travel with John H. Murray's Railroad Circus for 27 weeks in America.

A little later I was at Liverpool after a grand send-off at Sheffield. Adams' Company all wished me good luck, and I departed in the best of spirits. Having my wife with me and a little baby about two months old, we had a few preparations to make, but at last all was ready, and we settled down on board the steamship *Italy*.

We had a comfortable state room given us. My wife's berth was at the bottom and mine at the top. On the opposite side was a settee. I was specially privileged, being the only one allowed to burn a little light through the night—because of the baby.

At that time there were no gigantic racing Cunard and White Star liners, and our vessel, though of good size, gave us more than we liked of the notorious Atlantic "roll." On the third night out at sea a storm came on; we were not allowed to go on deck, and our imprisonment ended in our being battened down.

I was a fair sailor but my wife wasn't, and as for the baby it did not seem to care much which it was. A tremendous wave hit the ship and she staggered under it. The passengers in the saloon were seized with a panic and started singing psalms, which somehow didn't add much to our confidence. My wife made sure we were all going down, and in the middle of the hubbub the baby took a header out of the bunk and rolled under the settee, where it fixed itself until the ship gave a lurch in the

opposite direction, and back came baby a bit scared but not much hurt. Of course, the Providence which is said to have a special care for babies and drunken men was at hand somewhere.

What with my wife crying and what with the psalm singers and the baby yelling its loudest, my customary self-possession nearly deserted me, but in that unpleasant moment my "whimsicality" came to my rescue as it has often done when I've been in a tight corner.

I had a happy thought and I'll tell you what it was.

It so happened that on my coming on board some friend—I forget the name of the good Samaritan—presented me with a gallon of Scotch whisky of the right sort. Why not sample it in the hour of distress? was my question, which I at once answered in the affirmative by opening the wooden box which held the jar and extracting the bung, refreshed myself with a good "go." Much comforted, I climbed into my bunk and dropped off to sleep. Towards morning I awoke and was conscious of an awful smell of whisky. At first I thought it was a dream, but this idea soon vanished. The whisky aroma was too real. The very atmosphere seemed saturated with it. I looked over the side of my bunk and saw that the jar had rolled out of the box and had smashed itself against an iron trough which ran under the settee, and so round the steamer by the bulwarks.

I jumped out of my bunk and in my half-sleepy condition seeing the trough full of liquid I imagined the latter was simply whisky and water, and that all I had to do was to bale it out to prevent the

passengers in the next state room being annoyed by the smell. I seized a big head sponge and the jug of my wash basin and began sopping up the contents of the trough. I don't know how many times I filled and emptied the jug and still the trough was as full of whisky and water (as I thought) as ever. Then it dawned upon me that I was, like Mrs. Partington, trying to mop up the Atlantic! For the trough running as it did round the ship and at the stern allowing the steering chains to pass through, was always full of water. It was a sad business losing every drop of the precious whisky, but in these days of "Dora" and "Pussyfoot" it would have been a dire disaster. I daresay this reads like a trivial incident, but somehow trivialities have a way of sticking in the memory.

Apart from the whisky catastrophe, the voyage was a terrible one—it lasted 17 days—and when the ship arrived at New York she was minus two boats and the deck smoking saloon. However, the warmth of our reception made us forget all our troubles.

We drove direct to a boarding house, No. 75, Third Avenue, corner of Fourteenth Street, kept by Mrs. Scholes, and I made ready for my opening matinee at Harlum, New York.

I was at once at home with my audience, and it is no exaggeration to say that I was a tremendous success and so also was my wife, who was a member of the company and a fine rider and tight rope dancer. I have never been able to define precisely what amuses an audience. I believe it is a question of inspiration and maybe some sympathetic feeling which brings the performer and his public together,

goodness knows why or wherefore. Anyhow, all I can say of my first experiment with a New York audience was that it really consisted of putting in h's where they ought not to be, and the cockneyism went down immensely.

Fate ordained that in this, my first visit to New York, the great business of blowing up Hell Gate, a huge rock in the middle of the river, should take place. We were living at Houston Street at the time, not far from the scene of action, and everybody was in a state of the utmost alarm. The air was full of rumours, the least of which was that half New York would be destroyed by the concussion. Not a few of the residents in Houston Street removed their furniture and took refuge in Hoboken All the people in the house where I was were prepared for the roof to fall in, and the floors to close telescope fashion. The time for the explosion arrived. The little daughter of the chief of the police touched a little electric button—the rock flew into fragments and—that was all. Nothing else happened, not even a pane of glass was broken. But we all felt very much better.

I have fears that my recollections of my first American tour are rather mixed. We went to so many places. Everything was so new and fresh, so different from what we had been accustomed to in old England. There were no gaping rustics; no sleepy picturesque villages. No old churches. No inviting quaint hostelries. No rippling streams and moss-grown bridges.

When we went down south, for instance, we found audiences divided. The whites would not sit with the blacks. But of the two I preferred the

blacks. My word, they *could* laugh! One couldn't help being funny when one saw their black eyes rolling till you saw almost nothing but the whites, and their gleaming teeth stretching nearly from ear to ear!

But it was as well to be on your guard. Once I had to sing a song with the words like these:

> There was an old woman who had three sons,
> Benjamin, James, and John,
> One got lost, one got hung
> The other was lost and never was found,
> That was an end of the three sons.

I thought it would be a good joke to sit down by the side of a fat old negress whom I had spotted in the audience and say to the Ringmaster, "Here's a discovery."

"Where?"

"Why, here."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, here's the old lady who had three sons, Benjamin, James and John."

At this point I left the old lady, rushed into the arena, and whilst the audience were laughing, a man next to this old woman, also a nigger, stuck his hand behind his back.

"Look out," suddenly whispered Mr. Murray, the proprietor, to me, "he's going to pop you off."

That meant to shoot me.

I said, "Is he?"

Well, you know there is a pole that keeps the circus tent up in the centre, so I made myself as thin as possible against this pole, and directly the horse came round covering me from the nigger,

I ran out of the ring into my dressing room and disguised myself.

After the performance was over this outraged black gentleman wanted to find the clown who had insulted his mother. Said he, sticking out his chest with pride, "She never had any sons but me."

I never tried that wheeze any more and I was glad to get out of the town, for I was told that had this good son, who was so ready to defend the honour of his mother, had an opportunity, he would most certainly have put a bullet into me.

Perhaps a greater contrast between England and America could hardly be found than in their respective ideas about pantomime. Pantomime is (perhaps I ought to say *was*, for I'm afraid the juveniles of to-day have very little opportunity of seeing the real old-fashioned harlequinade) one of the cherished traditions of the English boy. Fifty years ago grown-ups had not come to look upon the pantomime as silly and vulgar. To children the clown with his mixed notions of *meum* and *tuum* was an old friend; the pantaloon, his companion and scapegoat in crime, hardly less so. If the child's notions as to the precise object of the mysterious flittings on and off the stage of the harlequin and columbine were a little hazy it did not much matter; they completed the picture. But in America—well, a disagreeable experience of mine showed what was thought of the clown on the other side of the Atlantic.

On one occasion I was standing at the back of the curtain waiting for the signal to enter the

arena, when a formidable looking gentleman who had somehow found his way in behind the circus, came up to me and stared me in the face. I could see he wasn't quite sober, but this didn't make him any the less dangerous. I was in my clown's dress and painted up; and looking at me with every sign of disapprobation he coolly pulled out a revolver.

"Say, damn you," he drawled, "I'm going to pop you off."

I knew the fellow meant shooting, but I showed no signs of alarm and remarked quietly,

"Why should you? I've never done you any harm. You don't even know me. I only arrived in this town with the circus this morning."

"No, you've done me no harm, but I don't like your general appearance."

And without a doubt he would have expressed his dislike in a more decided fashion, but at that moment one of the circus employees came along, hit him on the back of his neck with the palm of his hand, wrested the revolver from him and threw him down. My rescuer was only just in time, for the fellow meant mischief. It turned out that he was very drunk and on the verge of D.T. But would an Englishman in the same condition have a horror of the harmless clown? I fancy not.

In those days the revolver in America was far too handy to please me. When we were in Pittsburg murderous outrages were of constant occurrence, and one night my wife and I had quite a scare at the hotel where we were staying. She had gone to her room as usual and I remained

downstairs playing billiards. After a couple of games I went up to the bedroom, opened the door, and there saw my wife sitting up in bed trembling with fright.

She dared not speak, but calling pantomime business to her aid, she easily made me understand that a burglar was under the bed! I pantomimed back that I would go out of the room and fetch my six-shooter. I did so, made some kind of noise, opened the door and stalked in, calling out in a rough voice:

"Come from under that bed or I'll fire."

He crawled out—not a burglar, but a poor little collie dog wagging his tail in the most friendly manner. The collie belonged to the hotel proprietor, of whom I bought him for a 10-cent cigar. In my customary fashion with all the animals I ever had, I soon taught him no end of tricks, and he travelled with me during the rest of my tour in America. He was the best of pals and always looked after me in the most amusing fashion at the various restaurants where I dined and supped. I was very sad when the poor animal I had come to love so much was run over by a tramcar in Omaha and killed.

CHAPTER V

My second visit to America. A caravan journey across the prairies and the Rockies from New York to San Francisco. My experiences with Red Indians. A novel treatment of fever. Performances at San Francisco, Java and Australia. Return to New York. A "spiritualistic" swindle. Am engaged by Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson. The baby elephant born in the show becomes my playmate. An elephant's wonderful memory. My mysterious mission to Paris under "sealed orders." What the sealed letter contained—instructions to buy "Jumbo." Agitation in London over the proposed sale of the big elephant. The Zoological Society accept Barnum's offer. Proceedings in Chancery. The matter settled. "Jumbo's" opposition. The true story of the delay. A mishap to his car.

I SHALL never forget my second visit to America in 1879. It was the most delightful and novel experience a man could possibly have. Imagine travelling entirely by caravan and on foot right across prairie and mountain from New York to San Francisco, meeting little else but buffaloes and Red Indians! We had sixty horses with us, an Indian guide to lead the way, and it was a perfect holiday the whole time, a portion of the route taking us from Portland (Oregon), above the Conjoin Valley, as far as Seattle and through the Rockies amid the wildest and most romantic

scenery. This was before the Klondyke rush and Seattle was then a tiny village.

Our interviews with the various tribes of Indians we encountered were most interesting. I expected to find them in their war paint, but it was not so. They were beginning to forget their native customs under the influence of American domination. They had not long since had definite territory assigned them; they were no longer free to wander where they pleased, and they were very sore about it. When they found we were English they were most friendly. Had we been Americans I'm afraid we should have had a reception of quite a different character.

The tribe of Indians which escorted our caravans was the Pendeton, and they were very useful when we wanted water for our horses and did not know where to get it. We were easily understood, for most of them spoke very good English. At first we had the old-fashioned idea that they were treacherous, but they were nothing of the kind. I found them a grand people. They took an immense fancy to our coloured costumes and once one of their chiefs—a fine old fellow of eighty—said to me in his solemn way: "I like those coloured things you've on."

The coloured things were the variegated tights I was wearing in the little entertainment we were giving them, and I made him put them on, which he did—over his ordinary dress. Oh, what a sight! His friends screamed with delight, and nothing would satisfy them but my putting on the rest of the costume and doing a war dance in which they joined. It was rare fun.

One day we were short of food and the friendly old chief discovering this, said something in his own tongue to one of the young men who vanished and in about half an hour returned loaded with a couple of prairie chickens procured, how and where I can't say. To cook the chickens they made a wood fire and planted the birds, feathers and all, on the top. In about three-quarters of an hour the grill was ready and the cook, giving the chickens a few taps with his hatchet, feathers and skin all came off. They were served up on a tin plate with some kind of black bread, and I can only say that I never tasted anything more delicious in my life.

The sun was so scorching in the day time that we found it impossible to work the horses, so we travelled by night. The friendly Indians continued with us and one day one of the tribe was taken very ill. When this was told the chief, he said, " We must halt. We must find the river " —and a couple of scouts were sent on a voyage of discovery and came back with the news that there was a river about a mile away.

I was very curious to see the Indian method of treatment, in a case of fever which this was, and the chief asked me to come with him. I said I would, and leaving about a dozen of the tribe to look after the caravan and horses we travelled till we got to the riverside. Here some of the men scooped up mud from the river bed and built a small hut with it. Then lighting a fire inside they baked it until it was like the hot room of a Turkish bath. The patient was inserted and after allowing him to remain some little time

his doctors pulled him out and threw him into the river !

According to our European ideas this heroic treatment ought to have finished him, but it didn't. It finished the fever instead and in a few days the young fellow was quite well.

When we were through the Rocky Mountains our Indian pals left us, and two days' journey brought us opposite San Francisco, to reach which we had to cross a river in barges. We remained in San Francisco a week, and from here we commenced a most extensive tour, travelling first by boat to Java, where we performed, more to give the animals exercise than anything else, and thence to Australia. Just before reaching Australia we had rather a serious bit of trouble. While crossing the bight between Adelaide and Fremantle the sea was so rough that the ship was in jeopardy, and to save it we had by the captain's orders to throw some of the animals overboard. With what was left of the circus we gave some performances in Sydney and did remarkably well, and finally we returned to New York by a different route, after having been away some two years.

All that winter in New York I was "resting." The time passed pleasantly as I had made a good many friends, and among them Sammy Booth, the printer, in Centre Street. Mr. Booth—dear old gentleman—was always ready with a good cigar, and we had many a chat, for he loved to hear yarns about the old country. I had, of course, often heard stories of Yankee smartness, and during my acquaintance with Mr. Booth I

had personal experience of what I think I may call a super-instance of this characteristic supposed to be peculiar to America.

One day while in Mr. Booth's office a well-dressed man of affable manners called and gave the firm a very big order to flood New York with posters announcing a gigantic series of spiritualistic manifestations, for which he had hired the Academy of Music in Fourteenth Street, at that time the finest theatre in New York.

Mr. Booth accepted the order and invited some of his friends, of whom I was one, to go with him on the night in question. We arrived at the Academy to find the place packed to the roof. The drop went up, discovering a gentleman at a piano and a row of about twelve chairs. Then the lecturer in immaculate evening dress made his appearance and after an elaborate bow asked the assistance of twelve gentlemen of the audience, requesting them to step on to the stage "to prove that there is no deception in my spiritualism."

Upon this Mr. Booth, myself and the others mounted the stage and seated ourselves on the twelve chairs. The lecturer politely thanked us and went on to say that while he was away robing himself the gentleman at the piano would favour the audience with a selection from the national airs of America. Then he made his exit.

We soon discovered that the repertoire of the gentleman at the piano was extremely limited. It consisted of only one air—"Yankee Doodle." We had "Yankee Doodle," "Yankee Doodle" over and over again *ad nauseam*. The tune might

have been a squirrel in a revolving cage or a steam roundabout organ at a country fair.

We waited patiently for half an hour. No lecturer turned up. No—nothing, in fact, save the eternal "Yankee Doodle." The audience grew fidgety; then somebody shouted, somebody else followed, and at last dimly realising that they had been "had," an indignant crowd rushed upon the stage, bent upon taking the lives of the twelve gentlemen in the twelve chairs under the impression that they were parties in the swindle. Nothing but the fact of Mr. Booth being extremely well known saved us. Yells were heard for the money to be returned, but no money was forthcoming, the "lecturer" having hopped away with it some time before. I fancy the poor piano suffered. Some of us had a little bit of it as a relic. It had played its last "Yankee Doodle."

My next engagement was with Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson's show, and we opened in Madison Square Gardens in New York. This was in 1880, when for some reason or another, or perhaps no reason at all, there came about a boom in elephants. Perhaps it was due to the attraction of "Jumbo" at the Regent's Park Zoo, an immense favourite—in more senses than one—with the children and believed to be the biggest tame elephant in the world. Anyhow, everybody was going mad over elephants, and we at Barnum and Bailey's believed we had scored over any other show in Christendom when it was discovered that one of our lady elephants was about to become a mother. All the necessary preparations were made, expectation

ran high, and at last the youngster came into the world. It at once became a celebrity and a star, for it was the only elephant known to be born in bondage. Barnum and Bailey, you may be sure, made the most of the treasure. The birth was advertised in one way or another all over the world, and we had doctors from every part of the States and a few from Europe to see the marvellous little creature. The mother of the baby elephant was called Mother Hebe—and a dear kind mother she was. It was a pretty sight if somewhat grotesque to see her suckle the infant, which she did in quite a human fashion and totally different from the method adopted by any other animal.

Every afternoon at 4.30 I used to play with the baby elephant. I was as punctual as clockwork—a very important thing in the trainng of an animal's affections—and I never missed a day. When the baby was six months old I was nowhere in the game. He was thoroughly master of me and used to enjoy butting me all over the place. I do believe the old mother liked to see her son romping with me.

After the animals went into quarters for the winter I did not see my playmate for fifteen years, when the Barnum Show coming to Olympia in London, I called and asked Mr. Bailey what had become of the baby elephant. "You'll find him the first elephant round the corner," said Mr. Bailey. I went and spoke to him and he nearly went off his head with joy, so much so that he became really dangerous from excitement, and I had to leave. Elephants rarely forget kindnesses, but a fifteen years' memory was a tall order and familiar

as I was with the ways of animals I was quite taken by surprise.

In the course of its wanderings Barnum and Bailey's show found itself some time in 1881 at Chester, Pennsylvania. One evening about five o'clock when I was having tea at my hotel, Mr. Bailey came in. Said he:

"Whimmy, I want you to go to Paris."

Thinking he meant Paris in New York State I said: "All right. When?"

"Well," he returned, "you can catch the mail train to New York to-night and catch the steamer *Alaska* for Liverpool."

"Oh, then you mean the Paris in France."

"Yes."

Upon this I went to my wife and told her. She agreed and suggested that while I was in England I might go and see the children, who were in Hull. As for herself, she would be quite safe in America as Mr. Bailey would see that she was looked after.

Then came a little mystery which made me fancy I was an important diplomatic agent engaged on a mission which might plunge the world into war.

"Whimmy," said Mr. Bailey, when I was ready to start, "I wish you to give me your word of honour that you will not open this sealed envelope until you pass the Goddess of Liberty.

The Goddess of Liberty, of course, is the enormous figure which is so prominent an object to all steamers coming to or going from New York.

I gave my promise, said good-bye to my wife, and with my kit, a couple of shirts, socks, collars and so on, I caught the train to New York and boarded the *Alaska*.

I needn't say that I was all agog with curiosity to know what my "sealed orders" contained, for Mr. Bailey hadn't given me the slightest idea of what my mission to Paris meant, and the minute the *Alaska* passed the Goddess of Liberty I broke open the envelope. These were the instructions I found inside:

"Go to the Grand Hotel, Paris. There our representative, Davis, is lying dangerously ill. Do the best for him. Should he have gone before you get there, get all his papers and see him put away regardless of expense. After doing your business there go to the Zoological Gardens and buy "Jumbo." Don't give more than 5,000 dollars, and return after you have finished your business; also bring the Liliputian Aztecs with you."

For some months previous the most important topic discussed in London was the fate of "Jumbo." The big elephant was now twenty years of age and though perfectly docile in his daily duty of giving children rides in the gardens, and quite friendly with and obedient to Scott, his keeper, had when in confinement periods of irritability. There were reasons for this, and among others was the constant gorging of buns and various dainties of the same character and the want of sufficient exercise. It was known that the Fellows of the Royal Zoological Society were seriously perturbed what to do with the public's pet, and at last it was announced that the dearly beloved "Jumbo" must either be sold or shot!

Instantly a tremendous furore burst out. Ladies and children swarmed to the Zoo and "Jumbo" had the time of his life in the way of being pampered.

One lady never missed a day in taking a packet to the huge beast and dropping a few tears of sympathy. But the fiat had gone forth. "Jumbo" must be sold, for here was I, having taken on the responsibilities of Mr. Davis, representing Barnum and Bailey, ready to plank down the purchase money.

When this fact was announced a squabble arose among the Fellows. A certain section swore by all the gods that "Jumbo" should not leave the country, and applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the Council from selling him, on the ground that they had no power under their charter. During the hearing of the application on March 7th, 1882, before Mr. Justice Chitty, it was stated by the Secretary of the Society that Barnum's offer had been received on October 12th, 1881, and that it was resolved to accept this offer. He considered they had delivered "Jumbo" to Mr. Barnum when the £2,000 was paid. He then told Barnum's agent that he was the owner of the elephant, but that if he liked he would keep him for a short time on deposit.

Mr. Bartlett, the Superintendent of the Gardens, gave some interesting evidence. Numerous elephants he had known had become dangerous and had killed persons and had to be shot. "Jumbo" had at times in the last two years shown signs of "must." Last autumn he had smashed oak bars eight inches square, lined with iron, by striking them with his head. If the Society kept him, they would have to build a special house for him as the present one was not strong enough. The only thing that could be done when he went "must"

would be to chain him down and put him on half rations.

The upshot of the matter was that Mr. Justice Chitty decided that when the secretary reported on the 22nd February that the money had been paid the elephant was sold and that the Council had power to sell. In spite of this decision, lamentations went up, and one of "Jumbo's" indignant friends tried to start a subscription to keep him in the country.

Of course, the excitement and sentimentalism over the exodus of the big beast was all to the good from the showman's point of view. Mr. Bailey knew what he was about and he cabled to me to give a dinner to the Press at the Zoological Gardens before taking away the pet of the British public.

This dinner took place on a Friday evening and "Jumbo" was to leave on the following day. While we were enjoying ourselves at the dinner, Scott, "Jumbo's" keeper at the Zoo, called me out and told me that it was impossible to ship "Jumbo" that night as the elephant had positively refused to enter the travelling car which had been specially prepared for his conveyance to the docks.

I may say that this car was of peculiar construction. It was more like a tunnel than a car, being open at both ends, which were to be closed when "Jumbo" was inside. So many years have elapsed and so many of those in the "know" have passed away that there is no harm now in telling the story of "Jumbo" as seen from the inside. The tunnel arrangement was adopted with a view to taking "Jumbo" in. It was thought that when he saw the trees, grass, flowers and so on through the end

he would readily enter the tunnel under the impression that he was walking into the open air. It is my belief that "Jumbo" was far too shrewd to be "codded"—to use showman's slang—in this manner.

Besides—and this is where the secret comes in—Mr. Barnum, like Pharoah of old, had—so to speak—hardened his heart and would not let "Jumbo" go. Why should he be in a hurry. The English and American papers were paragraphing the obstinacy of "Jumbo" day after day, the difficulties of removal were made as much of as possible. Barnum was delighted with the fantastic notion that forty millions in Great Britain were tearing their hair in their anguish at having to part with their beloved beast, while fifty millions in America were going through the same operation lest at the eleventh hour something might happen to prevent them gloating over the possession of the precious pachyderm. It was a showman's policy to keep up the excitement for the sake of the advertisement, and so while it was made out that superhuman efforts were being made to induce "Jumbo" to set foot in the car, as a matter of fact this was the last thing desired until there were signs of the strain on the public mind giving way.

I needn't say that I put on an expression of intense anxiety when I announced to the feasting pressmen that I must deal with the difficulty at once, and as my absence did not mean any cessation of the festivities, I don't think they minded my going very much. The result was that I hurried off, took a hansom to the American Exchange, and cabled to Mr. Bailey: "Cannot get 'Jumbo'

away this week. Waiting instructions from you." Mr. Bailey cabled in return, "Keep 'Jumbo' back until further orders." I did. I kept him for six weeks. The *Persian Monarch*, which had been chartered, sailed without him, and all this time "Jumbo" obligingly refused to enter his tunnel-car.

When it was considered a suitable moment "Jumbo" was induced to take up his quarters in the travelling box, which with its living freight did not weigh much less than 12 tons. An inclined plane had been cut in the ground to make the floor of the box level with that of the cage, and all went well until in turning a corner in a somewhat narrow path a soft bit of gravel was reached, some stupid person called out "Whoa!" and the team of six powerful dray horses stopped in this awkward place. Before they could go on again, the wheels had sunk down to the axles. Here the box remained until night. The horses had to be taken out while powerful jacks were used to raise the conveyance, which was accomplished a little before midnight, "Jumbo" in the meantime having alternate fits of irritation and calmness. A little after 1 a.m. a fair start was made, and at length the road outside the Gardens was reached, and without further mishap the car was brought alongside the *Assyrian Monarch* at Millwall Docks.

CHAPTER VI

"Jumbo" shipped. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts gives him his last bun. Arrives safely at New York. A duty of £450 demanded. My awkward encounter with the Customs officer. Fatal accident to "Jumbo." Something about the Aztecs. Their curious history. I go in for theatrical management. I start with pantomime at the Metropolitan Alcazar, Broadway. Deverna's extraordinary rubber "properties." The topical hits greatly relished. The foolish penal code. Marriages in Barnum's captive balloon. My benefit and the misfortune that happened. The gallery gives way and many people injured. In five minutes I lose all my fortune.

At last the day arrived for the departure of the biggest passenger that ever left the British shores. Practically, as a passenger, he had the entire ship to himself (barring a few emigrants), for the *Assyrian Monarch* was a cargo ship and had been chartered for the purpose. No monarch could have had greater honours paid him. The steamer was dressed with flags and the boy crews of the training ships in the Thames manned the yards as he went by. The Baroness Burdett-Coutts and a party of friends bade him farewell on board the steamer and the Baroness gave him his last bun. It was said that messages recording the state of the illustrious

animal's health would be placed in india rubber bags in lieu of bottles and dropped into the sea at intervals, but whether this delicate attention was paid him I am unable to say, as I did not travel in the *Assyrian Monarch*, for having to reach New York some days before he did I went from Liverpool.

"Jumbo" arrived at Jersey city on April 9th and by night was lodged in Madison Square Gardens little the worse for the voyage, save that he had lost half a ton in weight owing to sea sickness. On the other hand he had contracted a taste for whisky, presumably administered for medicinal reasons. How much constituted a dose I am unable to say. The Customs authorities claimed £450 for duty, which the owners refused to pay on the ground that "Jumbo" had been imported for breeding purposes. The question was referred to the Treasury and ultimately the claim was abandoned. Again was "Jumbo" specially privileged. On the whole Barnum and Bailey made a splendid bargain. What with buying him, booming him in various ways and his transportation to America, he cost £3,000. On the other hand we cleared this sum in New York alone and during eighteen months we took 1,500 dollars per day—equivalent to £300.

That voyage of mine to America was marked by a comical incident which forced me to pretend to be something Nature had not fitted me for. The night before I left London for Liverpool I had a cable from Mr. Bailey instructing me to bring over a prize dog as a pet for Mrs. Bailey, she having no children. I brought the pug—"Punch" was its name—I also purchased 24

pairs of tights, 24 pairs of theatrical boots and a silver cornet for which I paid £16 at Chappell's of Bond Street, the cornet being for Mr. Robinson, who was the conductor of our band.

With all this paraphernalia I arrived at New York, and in due course presented myself and my belongings at the Customs. The officer passed everything excepting the silver cornet, at which he looked very doubtfully.

"What have you got there?" was his question.

"Oh, that's an implement of my trade," said I, readily enough.

"Yes? And who are you?"

This was a poser, but I thought I was equal to it, so I explained that I was a musical clown at Madison Square Gardens.

The officer smiled cordially.

"I'm real pleased to hear that," said he. "Come into the office and give us a few of your latest English tunes."

He wasn't contented with this (to me) monstrous proposal, but actually invited some of his brother officials to form part of the audience! What my consternation was like I cannot describe. I had never blown a cornet in my life! However, I wasn't going to be done, and plucking up my courage I followed him into the office, brought out the cornet, put the mouthpiece on it, and with all the assurance of a professional musician asked the gentlemen what he would like to hear.

"Play one of your own compositions," said he.

I did. I composed it on the spot and made the most terrible noise that ever issued from a cornet.

The official evidently was not impressed.

"Where's the invoice for this?" he remarked drily.

I showed it to him—there was no help for it.

"Ah. That'll cost you so many dollars extra. You'd better get out and do a bit of practice."

I never had such a take down and I felt I'd made a fool of myself.

When I took the cornet to Mr. Robinson he said, "What a beauty," but on my telling him of my adventure and what the instrument cost, he nearly fell into a fit.

"My dear Whimmy," said he laughing heartily, "I could have got the thing cheaper in New York."

"Jumbo's" lost half-ton was soon made up. He began speedily to put on flesh again and despite the fact that he had more exercise with the show and less buns than at the Zoological Gardens, he became fat and unwieldy and certainly lazy. All this led to his undoing. Some eighteen months after he became an American citizen he was being removed from one town to another, and during the journey was taken along the railway track to avoid the crowds which were anxious to see him free, gratis and for nothing. He was proceeding along a bend in the line when a big locomotive engine was heard coming behind. The driver did not see the big beast, and "Jumbo," in total ignorance of his danger, could not be induced to quicken his pace. The attendants did all they could to urge him on, but his indolence had become too strong a habit. The locomotive struck him violently on the side as he was leaving

the metals, and he fell down the incline, where he lay till his death, which occurred some few hours after. Nothing could be done as he had received severe internal injuries.

Passing from the very big to the very little I might say a word or two about the Aztecs which Barnum was so anxious to have to add to the attractions of his show. They were an ugly diminutive couple with dark olive skins, gleaming eyes and big hook noses. I dare say some of my older readers may remember them being quite a rage in London and the provinces in the early 'sixties. They were brought from Mexico by one Reaney, who represented them as being the last of their race, and as also having royal blood in their veins. This may have been so, but I have a suspicion that the story was a showman's fake.

Royal or not, they proved a mine of wealth to their exhibitors, though they hadn't the slightest spark of interest in themselves personally. They were hardly four feet high and exceedingly slightly built. With their ringletted hair they looked more like dolls or wax figures from a costumier's window than human beings, and they passed their time in smoking cigarettes and quarrelling in some kind of guttural jargon which no one but themselves understood. They were a most unpleasant looking couple, yet the British public clustered round them—the ladies especially—anxious to shake them by the hand, though their palms were generally moist and dirty and very disagreeable to the touch.

When I was commissioned to take them to America they had lost their celebrity and had

fallen very low indeed. After being exhibited in a penny side booth during the last days of the Surrey Gardens, where they were much more interested in their own snarlings than in the gaping visitors, they became the property of a Mrs. Morris, who hired a shop in the New Cut and turned it into a show, and there I found them.

I may be wrong, but to my mind, speaking as one who has passed a good part of his life among shows and showmen, that the taste for freaks and monstrosities once so marked a characteristic of the British sightseer has disappeared. If so, it is hardly to be regretted.

After I finished my season with the Barnum and Bailey "Jumbo" season in America I had saved a few thousand dollars, so I thought I would go in for management in the theatrical business. I decided to produce an English pantomime and made arrangements with Deverna, the finest theatrical property artificer in America. Deverna was marvellous in making, among other achievements, properties of rubber, and he made two tramway horses—all of rubber, so that they could be stretched right across the stage and if you let them go they would return to their proper places. These two cost me a lot of money, but they were worth it. You could knock them off their feet and they would right themselves in the most startling fashion. I rented the Metropolitan Alcazar Theatre, Broadway, New York, from a Mr. Wilson for three months. I engaged a first-class company and gave them three weeks' rehearsal and set to work to produce the panto-

mime, the title of which was "The Three Wishes."

We opened on December 19th, to a big house. The English harlequinade was a novelty to an American audience and I was curious to see how it would go down. Everybody, I suppose, has his own idea of fun, and where one person sees humour another sees nothing to laugh at, so I had to take my chance. The result, however, was a success. *The New York Herald* was good enough to say of my efforts that they "provoked considerable laughter." It further observed that "Deverna's splendid pantomime and ballet, 'Les Amours de Venus' by M. Baptistan, were well received. Many of the local scenes were recognised, and the hits at the penal code and the peculiarities of horse car travel drew forth sympathetic applause and hearty laughter."

I may say in explanation of the "hits" at the penal code that the latter was an extraordinary enactment, which could only have been passed when the legislative authorities were in a temporary condition of imbecility. It laid down all kinds of rules and regulations as to what was proper and improper to do on Sunday, and a more fussy and grandmotherly scheme for interfering with individual liberty was never devised. As the notoriously prudish Comstock was the person appointed to carry out the obnoxious law, it is pretty certain he took a keen delight in pouncing upon offenders and exacting the fine laid down for a breach of the code.

The Americans are certainly an extraordinary people, with their constant craving for excite-

ment, for bigness in everything, for the almighty dollar, and for their extreme sentimentalism. They are perpetually involving themselves in contradictions. At the very moment when some were howling about Sabbatarian morality, others were crazy over cock fighting! Matches were being got up and fought in hosts of places, not secretly but openly, and reports of the combats were published in the papers without any apology. The incongruity did not occur to me at the time, but it did afterwards, when I myself was interested in the doings of game cocks, as will be told in the proper place.

So long as you can tickle the curiosity and vanity of the Americans and make them fancy you're going to show or give them something the rest of the world has never seen or possessed, you're on the right lines as a showman. Barnum, the prince of the profession, discovered this as early as 1842 when he exhibited General Tom Thumb, and he was always bringing out something fresh and "unique" to the very end of his long career.

He was extraordinarily fertile in finding out new ways of pleasing the American public and incidentally making money. One of his most original notions he worked out while I was with him. He had a captive balloon for flights, in which, of course, he made a charge. How he came to extend this privilege into an extra special one I am unable to say, but New York was one day startled by an announcement that marriages were being "solemnised"—I suppose this is the proper word—daily in the captive balloon!

And this turned out to be the case. Engaged couples were crazy to be married up in a balloon and Barnum was quite ready to oblige them. The balloon carried a clergyman at every trip and united the candidates in the free and easy fashion which the American marriage law approves. Of course, he had his fee and so did Barnum, who charged for the flight a sum which, though high, was eagerly paid by the bridegroom.

What there was so attractive in this absurdity I am unable to say, unless it enabled the couples so wedded to crow over those who had to be contented with a commonplace church or chapel.

To return to the Alcazar pantomime. I of course was clown, and I had splendid support from Charles Christie, pantaloon; J. F. Raymond, harlequin; Thomas Watson, sprite; and Eva French, columbine. I needn't say there was any number of pretty girls in the ballet.

The run continued through the Christmas holidays to January 3rd, which night I set apart for my benefit. By the irony of fate that night proved to be most disastrous in my career—I lost a fortune in less than five minutes. A tremendous crowd had assembled outside the theatre, and I told my manager to open the doors. The house was crowded to suffocation and just when we were going to begin there was a stampede from the top gallery. It had dropped two feet with the weight of the people. Women and children were shouting and crying—some with arms and legs broken—but, thank God, there were no lives lost.

BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

WINDSOR CASTLE

FEBRUARY 25th, 1886, at Three o'clock.

EQUESTRIAN ENTERTAINMENT

By Members of

MR. CHARLES HENGLER'S GRAND CIRQUE, LONDON.

PROGRAMME

1—JUGGLING ON HORSEBACK - M. ONRA

2—The LILLIPUTIAN PONY, "LITTLE JOHN," presented by Mr. WILLIAM POWELL.

3—THE PERCHE - MM. ETHERDO & ST. LEON

4—The MATCH PONIES, "POPPY" and "DAHLIA," introduced by Herr ALEXANDER BLENNOW.

5—Miss NELLIE BAILEY - FEATS OF EQUITATION

CLOWN - - - CHIRGWIN.

6—HURDLE ACT - Mr. WILLIAM PERMANE

7—THE MANEGE, by Miss ADELINE PRICE, introducing the Thoroughbred, "RAJAH."

8— THE VILLION BICYCLE TRIO.

9—PIROUETTE and SOMERSAULT ACT, By Mr. CHARLES FISH

CLOWN - - WHIMSICAL WALKER

10— WHIMSICAL WALKER'S DONKEY.

11—ROMULUS, HUNYADI & LESINGTON, exhibited by Herr ALEXANDER BLENNOW.

12—"THE JOCKEY" - Senor FELIX THOMASSO

13—RACE BY PONIES, RIDDEN BY MONKEY JOCKEYS

Musical Director - - - - Mr GEO. CLEMMENTS

Managers - - - { Mr W. POWELL
Mr ALBERT H. HENGLER

Proprietor - - - - Mr CHARLES HENGLER

The Royal Windsor Castle Programme

There was no performance that night, and subsequently the authorities condemned the theatre. The accident had a sequel which was of grave consequence to me. The people who had been injured brought actions against me and they got absolutely everything I had, to the last dollar I had saved for five years, and I was left penniless. There was only one thing to do—return to England—so I borrowed 500 dollars from Mr. Bailey and took boat for Liverpool.

CHAPTER VII

I join Hengler's Circus at Liverpool. Mr. Charles Hengler's peculiarities. A black or red nose? An unlucky ride in the early morning after a late night. I break my ankle. Incapacitated for two years. I go with Hengler's to Dublin. My popularity. A favourite song. I experiment with performing cats. They have stage fright. A Dublin reporter taken aback. "Billy Gladstone." The reporter's revenge. My awkward experience on the boat to Holyhead. A "Dick Turpin" impromptu ride to York.

When I arrived at Liverpool, Hengler's Circus chanced to be there, and as Mr. Hengler and myself were old friends I called upon him and was engaged. Some years before at Hull I had made Mr. Hengler's acquaintance and had got to know his peculiarities. I found him a good straight man, somewhat severe—would have his business done to his liking—and that was his success through life. Everything had to be the essence of cleanliness. I have seen him go round the stables with his white handkerchief in his hand smoothing down the horses' backs to see if they were clean. He was a terror with the grooms—the least dirty spot on a horse—the groom had to go!

Well, on my opening night, I had on a beautiful satin dress. My nose was black and my face was white. I went into the arena and knocked lumps off myself—because I thought the first impression was everything—but when I came out I was exhausted—fell down—fighting for breath. Anyhow, I had made a huge success, and when Mr. Charles Hengler came round I thought he was going to compliment me. Oh dear no. Instead of compliments he said sternly:

"You know, sir, your nose looks dirty—and it frightens the children. Don't put it on again, sir!"

That was all I got from him for nearly killing myself. Well—I was broken hearted. "Shall I leave now," I wondered, "or stop the week"?

The next night came: he was sitting in his box, and I went in the arena—black nose and all—to let him know I didn't care. I came out after doing my business and he came to me and said only these words: "You've got it on again, sir."

I didn't reply to him, but I went to his manager, Mr. Wm. Powell, and told him that I was leaving on Saturday!

"Don't you be a fool," was Mr. Powell's rejoinder. "What Mr. Hengler has told you is for your benefit. Instead of putting black on your nose try a bit of red."

So I did, and I must confess it was a tremendous improvement when I next went on. When I came off Mr. Hengler called me out and complimented me on the improvement; and I stopped fourteen years on and off with him! I was so

good that it cost him £1,000 in London to advertise me. I became very great friends with all in the circus from Mr. Hengler downwards, and especially with Mr. Wm. Powell, his manager and son-in-law.

Meeting with Mr. Hengler in Liverpool when I was so hard up I considered was a bit of luck, but I had not reckoned for the unexpected. It so happened that Marie Roze was singing in the city, and she invited Mr. Albert Hengler and myself to a grand supper at the Adelphi Hotel. We had an exceedingly jolly time and the small hours came upon us before we had finished. Not feeling too brisk and having the prospect of a matinee before us, we thought it would not be a bad idea to have a gallop in the country to buck us up for the show. Accordingly we went to the circus stables and got the groom to saddle a couple of horses. Now circus horses are shod like race horses, their shoes are quite flat, and this was the cause of the stroke of ill luck which suddenly descended upon me.

All went well until we had gone two miles or so on the Derby Road, when it came on a drizzle of fine rain. Shortly after, we saw a herd of cows coming out of a field and at the same time a tram-car approached us up the hill. To avoid both cows and car I was obliged to take the wrong side of the road. The fates conspired against me with malignant unanimity. The drizzle chose to turn itself into a heavy shower—one of the outside passengers was moved to open his umbrella. If he'd only done so two minutes sooner or two minutes later all would have been well, but no—he must needs put up the thing with a jerk at the very instant I was riding past the car. My horse

shied at it, his flat shoes had no hold on the wet, greasy tram lines, and down he went and his rider with him. Result—a broken ankle for me.

A cab was fetched, I was taken home and the doctor came and set my leg. I was in bed for five months and it was two years before I appeared in the ring again. But Mr. Charles Hengler was ever so good to me, so I never wanted for anything. I remember the doctor coming one morning and saying I could have a small glass of Guinness' stout, half of a potato and the middle part of a chop. But instead of a small glass of stout I had two bottles and two potatoes—and I thought the doctor would not know what I had taken. Next morning he came and felt my pulse and looked at me, and wanted to know what I had been doing. My wife told him that I had had two bottles of stout and more than two potatoes. He said to me, "Well, young man, you have only put yourself back one month," and this turned out to be true.

When I was in active work again I went about with Hengler's to various places and eventually found myself in Dublin. I connect Dublin with very important stage business which had much to do with my subsequent career. It was in Dublin that I took up seriously the training of animals and especially of my celebrated donkeys, of which I shall have much to say a little later on. But at first I was engaged in ordinary clowning. I have no hesitation in saying that the Dublin audiences are the best and most appreciative I've ever played to, and as for the hospitality of the Dublin people, there's no end to it.

I made a very tremendous success with this song:

In Dublin's sweet city,
Where the girls are so pretty,
That's where I met my sweet Mollie Malone.
She wheeled a wheelbarrow
Through streets wide and narrow,
Crying cockles and mussels,
Alive, alive O—Alive, alive O,
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive—O.

Now she died with the fever
And nothing could save her,
And that was the end of sweet Mollie Malone.
And her ghost wheels her barrow,
Through streets wide and narrow,
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive—O,
Crying cockles and mussels alive, alive—O!

They used to call me their Dublin pet. Our performances were given in Mr. Hengler's place in the Rotunda, a very fine theatre. Mr. Hengler came to me one day and I could see by his expression that some project was simmering in his mind.

"Whimmy," said he, "I saw something in Paris that would suit you."

"What was that?" I asked.

He replied that he saw a man with some performing cats and that he made them do some very clever things.

"Now why shouldn't you do something of that kind?" he went on.

"Well, if it'll please you, Mr. Hengler," was my answer, "I'll get some cats and train them."

Accordingly I secured four cats—never mind how I got them—real Irish cats they were, and I gave a man eighteen shillings per week for thirteen weeks only to look after them. I had four wooden

boxes made, painted red outside and whitewashed inside. I used to get up at six o'clock in the morning to go down to the circus before anybody was about, to train my pupils. I used to take boiled milk and boiled liver, and had a couple of hours every day, with the exception of Sunday, and in this fashion their education went on for thirteen weeks.

Of course it needed any amount of patience on my part, for I had to make them do the same things over and over again until it became simply a habit. This is the secret of training animals—habit. Well, I got these cats to perfection—they used to jump through wire hoops, walk the tight rope with a little bird in their mouths to prove that you could train a cat to bring a bird to one without harming it, and other feats.

My benefit came, and of course I had huge posters all over the city of Dublin: "The greatest novelty in the world: four wonderful performing cats will appear at my benefit. Whimsical Walker—Clown!"

The house was packed to suffocation and I did about a dozen acts before introducing the star turn. Sedately the cats followed me in rotation into the ring and one of the grooms put four little stools down for them to sit on. I turned round to pick up a hoop and at that moment some fool in the gallery made a noise with his mouth. The cats bolted at the sound and I have never seen them from that day to this!

I expected a great row as it seemed to me the audience would look upon me as a fraud and consider themselves sold, but they took the thing as a joke, and I can only think that they understood the

reason and held me innocent of any attempt to deceive them. All the same, every time I went to Dublin I was chaffed unmercifully about the cats. I must admit that my first experience with performing animals was not encouraging, but the time came when my patience was rewarded, though there was always the risk of something happening which was not in the programme.

I had a good many queer adventures in Dublin and not the least funny was an episode in which a reporter of the *Freeman's Journal* figured. Some of us used to go to the Hummums Hotel Turkish Baths about four times a week—just to have a rest and get ready for business at night. In the cooling room of these baths was a huge cold water bath—say about five feet deep—with four couches round it. Mr. William Powell—Hengler's manager—was on one couch sleeping, I was next to him on another one, and dear Father O'Brien—a very stout priest—on a third.

We were all resting quietly when Kelly, the reporter in question, had the assurance to waken Mr. Powell and ask him for two passes for the circus. Of course Mr. Powell was annoyed at being awakened, and under his breath said, "Whimmy, fake him in the plunge."

Tumbling to the idea, I said, "Kelly, have you seen my new trick that I am going to do for my benefit? Just stand there on that rubber mat."

This was on the edge of the plunge. I did a somersault—slipped—my head came in contact with his stomach—and, of course, he fell into the plunge. Well, we got him out and when he stood on the mat Father O'Brien laughed so much that we had

to rush out and get him a drop of brandy or I am sure he would have choked. He said it was the funniest thing he had ever seen in his life.

Of course Mr. Kelly's clothes were saturated, so we took them off and gave them to the attendant to put into the hot room until they were dry. When they came back the trousers were about three inches too short and Kelly's face was three inches or so too long. We made out, of course, that it was an accident, but he never asked for any more passes!

Another incident I fear was the result of too much hospitality on the part of my Irish friends. A short time after the Turkish bath escapade, one of the company was taken ill with brain fever and removed to the hospital, where he died. He was a Russian by birth named Becker. He was a Catholic and I promised him that I would look after him at his funeral. He was to have been buried on a Saturday morning, and it so happened that I had accepted an invitation to a birthday party the night before. I had a jollification and I'm afraid I put away a lot of Chartreuse.

About 5 o'clock in the morning I told my friends that I must really go, but they would not hear of it. I insisted, however, and going out called a jarvey to take me home to Meryon Square, not very far from where I engaged the car. In the meantime my friends had taken off my boots for a lark, thinking that I would then stop, but this made no difference and I went away in my socks.

I asked the jarvey when he had got about 100 yards what I owed him, and he said, "Eight bob,

sir." I replied, "What! I'll give you five shillings." He pulled up and called a policeman, saying that I would not pay his fare—eight shillings. I alighted, thinking I would have a bit of fun (this was about 5.30 on a summer's morning in August) and I started having a run for my money round the car, the policeman and jarvey after me. Of course I was without boots.

I was round the car—underneath the horse—about three times—till the bobby thought he would stop me, so he waited at the other side of the horse. I bobbed under the horse and as I bent down my head came in contact with his stomach, and he caught his heels against the kerb and down he went. He was soon on his feet, collared me with the assistance of the jarvey, and ran me into a little tiny one-room police station. No one was about, being early in the morning, so there were no witnesses.

I was taken before a row of policemen, and the question was asked, "What the charge was." "Not paying the jarvey's fare and insulting the Dublin constabulary." The officer asked me my name, and I answered "Billy Gladstone." Mr. Gladstone was working very hard for Home Rule at this time. I needn't say I did not look much like the great statesman, especially as I had no boots on. The officer got up from his table, and with the aid of the other officer took me by the back of the collar and a certain part of the top of my trousers and threw me into a little room.

"I'll give you 'Billy Gladstone,'" he remarked, and I'm bound to admit he did.

I must have been in the cell two hours and then another constabulary man entered.

" Would you like a cup of tea," he asked in a friendly way, and I had no hesitation in saying yes.

He brought me one, so I said: " Will you let me out," thinking that I had kept the joke up long enough.

The policeman looked at me.

" Ain't you Whimsical Walker—the clown ? " he asked.

I said, " Yes."

" Then why did you put your name on the sheet as ' Billy Gladstone ' ? "

" That was only fun. I'm very sorry ! "

I then told the policeman what I had to do that very morning, and how I had promised I would see poor Becker buried. After a lot of persuasion, the policeman said he would let me out if I promised to be at the Four Courts at 12 o'clock, and of course I promised.

The morning was now getting on, and I asked the policeman to lend me a pair of his boots—which he did—and a pretty picture I looked with the policeman's boots on, about a dozen sizes too big for me, and in evening dress !

However, I went to the hospital and took the corpse to Glasnevin Cemetery, and buried my poor comrade. It was a solemn affair, yet there was hardly anyone except myself there to see the last of the poor Russian. So having kept my word I went down to the Four Courts and stopped there until my case came off.

Presently, a voice holloaed out, "William Gladstone!"

Of course I knew that was me. The court was crowded to suffocation. When I made my appearance in the dock—as "William Gladstone"—there was a scream and a titter, and the magistrate threatened to clear the court.

"Do clear the court, and I'll go with them," I put in.

That did it, and somebody shouted: "Why that's Whimmy Walker—hooray! Another hoax!"

The end of the business was that I had to pay eight shillings to the jarvey, £1 for insulting the constabulary, and two shillings and sixpence fine.

I left the court and I met the very Mr. Kelly with whom I had the bath encounter, and this is where he got his own back.

Said he:

"You've done a nice thing; it will be in every London paper that you've been locked up for being drunk and disorderly and fighting the constabulary."

"The deuce it will!" I exclaimed. "Can't you stop it?"

"Come to my office," he replied, "and I'll get the wires at work."

I followed him on to a car to his office and I gave him a cheque for £20 for suppressing the news, and I guess he bought himself a new suit of clothes with the money.

I'm inclined to believe that there's something in the air of Ireland and in the spirit (I'm not referring to whisky) of the Irish people which

stimulates one to fun and frolic. An Irishman, no matter how old he grows, is said to be always a "b-hoy." However this may be, I found myself the subject of a joke and in an awkward predicament during the journey from Dublin to Holyhead *en route* for Hull.

On board the boat was a poor old Irish woman with a dear little baby about three months old in her arms. Just as we got outside the harbour everyone was very sick as the sea was very rough. As for myself, being a good sailor, it did not affect me. But this poor old woman was so awfully bad that she thrust the baby into my arms with a pitiful, "Glory be to God, hold it for a while." Without exaggeration I can say I had that baby squalling in my arms for four hours. Nobody would take it from me—even the sailors would not. It was considered great fun to make Whimmy keep the baby until our arrival at Holyhead. During the voyage I couldn't find the mother of the baby anywhere, and if I tried to put the baby on to anybody else they said it was a father's duty to look after his own child. The joke was kept up till we got into Holyhead Harbour, when as we got in, the mother came up, blessed me, and took the child, and everybody sang "For he's a jolly good father." What I said to the old Irish woman—well, it was plain English, if not plain Irish.

We had to stop at Holyhead till about 2 o'clock in the morning for Mr. Hengler's special train. In the meantime we went round and had sundry drinks till it occurred to us that we'd better get back to the station.

On our way, we met a man leading a beautiful black horse—it had just came off the boat—and being full of devilment nothing would do but we must play "Dick Turpin's Ride to York" on this black horse. The man with the horse thought he had met a lot of lunatics, but he was helpless and we did as we liked. One of our party jumped on the beautiful black horse, galloped down the street, when the horse stopped suddenly and Dick Turpin went over his head and fell into—well, it was not a strawberry bed! The police collared the lot of us—including the horse, but they let us off with a caution when they found out who we were.

CHAPTER VIII

The doings of my donkeys " Tom " and " Jerry." How I educated them. The training of animals. A Hull doctor hoaxed. My misadventure on the opening night at Hull. How " Tom " was taught to sing. " Jerry " suddenly drops dead at Glasgow. " Tom's " great cleverness. How he scared the ballet girls at the Leicester Square Empire. " Tom " undergoes a singular surgical operation at Bordeaux. How I said " something nice " to Mr. Gladstone at Covent Garden Theatre. I am " commanded " to perform before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. " Tom's " misbehaviour on this occasion. Her Majesty's appreciation of the performance.

I PROPOSE to devote this chapter mainly to the doings of my donkeys. I can't observe chronological order, but I imagine that so far as myself and my performing pets are concerned chronology doesn't matter to anybody. So I put down my recollections just as they come into my head.

As I have already said, it was during my first visit to Ireland that the idea of performing donkeys came into my mind. I can't say what originated it unless it was that I had noticed the Irish donkeys were more intelligent than those of other countries. I decided, however, that they were more reliable than Irish cats and certainly funnier, and after all this was the main point. I didn't know any

donkeys, so I advertised for two, my advertisement running, "Wanted: two donkeys. No 4, Lower Dominick Street."

I was taken aback when the servant entered my room looking rather alarmed.

"If you please, sir, a lot of donkeys have come."

And they *had* come—in crowds. I was overwhelmed with donkeys. As the day wore on more donkeys arrived. I do believe all the donkeys in and out of Dublin were poured upon me. Anyhow, I selected two—oddly enough they were the first two I saw—and bought them for 15/- Whether it was judgment or good luck which made me choose them I can't say, but they turned out to be the cleverest animals I had ever had anything to do with. I named them "Tom" and "Jerry," and under these names they became celebrated all over Great Britain and Ireland and even on the continent.

I devoted fourteen months to the training of "Tom" and "Jerry." As in the case of cats, I got them into the habit of performing the tricks I wanted and treated them with uniform kindness, and they would follow me about like dogs. It is quite a mistake to suppose that animals can be taught anything by brutality. The great thing is to get them entirely used to you, and as a lesson meant something in the way of a reward they became quite eager for the visits of their master. I used to feed my donkeys myself, clean them myself, and every day at the same time I, so to speak, put them through their paces.

That the training of animals is chiefly the getting

them to do things in a certain way until the habit is fixed upon them is in my opinion the secret. I remember a curious instance of this in the case of a bullfinch belonging to a friend of mine. The bird for some reason best known to itself would never use the bath placed in its cage for the purpose, but persisted in sprinkling itself with water from its drinking trough. This went on for some time, to the annoyance of its owner, and at last the expedient was tried of emptying the drinking trough. It was confidently expected that deprived of this substitute for a bath it would bathe itself in the proper receptacle. Not at all. The bullfinch put its head through the wires and went through its ablutions in pantomime, though not a drop of water entered its beak! What was the thought—if any—in the bird's mind it would be impossible to say, but it was evidently satisfied with going through the necessary movements in accordance with the habit it had got into.

Whether my theory of training is right or wrong, I succeeded with "Tom" and Jerry," and by the time the circus had to leave Ireland for its engagements elsewhere they were pretty well proficient, but became more so subsequently.

When we reached Hull at the end of our journey from Ireland thousands assembled to give us a reception, and a hearty one it was. Somehow the fame of Hengler's and possibly that of "Tom" and "Jerry" had preceded us, and I was invited to lunch by Mr. Cuthbert, manager of the Theatre Royal. The hotel was next the theatre and the party was a very jolly one.

Just as we were coming away who should pass

the door but a groom with one of my donkeys. The sight at once suggested larks, especially as we were all in the proper mind for a spree. In a trice the donkey was dragged into the hotel and bunked upstairs into one of the bedrooms. Then we borrowed an old woman's nightcap from one of the chambermaids, stuffed it on the donkey and put him to bed.

The next step was to ring up a doctor and 'phone a message "Come at once—visitor in bedroom No. 7 taken dangerously ill." The doctor came and of course he was at first intensely disgusted at being sold, but he soon got over his anger. As for the visitors and the servants, they were screaming with laughter, and I never heard such shouts and yells. Old Mr. Daunton, the proprietor, was, however, not among those who were pleased, and I don't think he ever quite forgave me. Of course the whole thing was very silly, but I don't think we'd quite shaken off the effects of "ould Ireland"—besides, the luncheon *was* very good. Whatever may be said of it, the hoax served one excellent purpose—it acted as a splendid advertisement—and the Yorkshire papers were full of it.

On that night—the opening night—I made my appearance. Being a native of Hull and an immense favourite, the audience—as was said of a reception given to a very great actor—simply "rose at me." The warmth of their applause coupled with memories of the lunch earlier in the day, assisted possibly by later reminders of the same sort, rather distorted my equanimity—correctly speaking I should say equilibrium. As

I made my entrance into the arena I caught my foot in the carpet and down I went sprawling on my face. The people thought it was all in my "business" and shouted with delight. As a matter of fact, when I picked myself up I saw not one horse going round and round, but thousands. It was the climax of that day's festivities.

"Where's the ring door?" I gasped feebly to one of the grooms and groped my way out.

On the next day I was carpeted before Mr. Hengler, the severe. He eyed me more, however, in sorrow than in anger.

"What was the matter with you last night?" he enquired in slow accents.

I explained I was suffering from a bad bilious attack!

"H'm. Don't let it occur again."

No more I did—at all events not in Hull. I knew well enough that Mr. Hengler had his eye on me.

But let us return to our donkeys.

It was at Norwich where I first got them to sing. Hengler's Circus was then performing at the Agricultural Hall, and I always had an hour a day to practise them and let them have a bit of exercise in the arena. They used to run about playing with each other like children, and one day I bought them a couple of toy bag-pipes. I was blowing these bag-pipes, making a fearful noise, when "Tom" pricked up his ears and began to bray with all his might.

Mr. Hengler hearing the music (?) said to me, "If you can only make him do that before the audience your fortune will be made."

"Very well," I said, "then dashed if I don't try it to-night."

I did try and he brayed until one might think he wanted to burst himself. Of course I thought my fortune *was* made, so I tried it two nights longer. He still went on. His vocal powers were the talk of the city; everybody was coming to see this singing donkey "by command."

On the fourth night I tried him again—he would not take the least bit of notice of me.

"You're tired of the bag-pipes," I thought, "I'll try you with a trombone."

The trombone satisfied him for four nights, then his soul pined for something else and I couldn't get any braying out of him. A violin stimulated him for about a week, and then he dropped singing altogether.

I was in despair till Mr. Amzieu, Mr. Hengler's horse trainer, said one day, "Why don't you give him a bit of sugar or a bit of carrot every time he brays?"

I took the hint, had a bed made in his stall, and I slept over his bed in the stable for six weeks, and every time he brayed I gave him a bit of sugar. In fact, I stopped so long with him that I believe I was nearly turned into a donkey. For years after that he never missed braying when I wanted to show him off.

At Glasgow, where we opened in the new building at the bottom of Wellington Street, the donkeys were a great success, but catastrophe was impending. I used to let loose my donkeys in the arena for exercise and on one occasion I ordered my groom to take out "Tom," who was

the singing donkey, and in addition to his vocal abilities was also possessed at times of fits of viciousness, but was the cleverer of the two; and I had charge of "Jerry."

What happened was this: I had no sooner taken hold of "Jerry's" bit than he dropped down—dead! My first impression was that he had been poisoned, so sudden was the whole thing. I sent for the veterinary surgeon, but of course he was of no use. Then came the post-mortem and it was decided that he had died not from poison, but from over-feeding. He had had an apoplectic fit.

There was a wonderful difference in my two donkeys. "Jerry" was never tired of stuffing himself and was certainly the fattest donkey I ever saw. "Tom," on the other hand, no matter what he ate, and he had plenty of corn and hay, persisted in remaining lean. He was of an intensely restless disposition and was what is called a "weaver," that is, he would never keep still in his stable. The contrast between the fat and the lean donkey was very effective in the ring, and it never occurred to me to diet "Jerry." His fatness made up for his lack of cleverness and perhaps was the cause of it. Poor "Tom" years after eventually came to a sad end. He got kicked to death by one of Mr. Adney Payne's horses at the "Paragon" in the Mile End Road. It was a terrible loss to me. I would not have taken £1,000 for him.

During his memorable career "Tom" did good suit and service for me, and besides being the hero of many an episode, rehearsed and un-

rehearsed, he put a good deal of money in my pocket. I was getting a very big salary for him when Sir Augustus Harris was chairman of the "Empire" in Leicester Square; and on one occasion when "Tom" at the request of Sir Augustus was performing at a rehearsal, Madame Katey Lanner, the well-known ballet mistress, was sitting on the prompt side of the stage watching his antics. Without any warning one of his vicious brain storms set in, and he chose to take a violent dislike to Madame Lanner, for which I'm quite sure there wasn't the slightest cause, and he virtually ran amok.

He put his ears back—made for poor inoffensive Madame Lanner, who promptly fell from her chair—then turned his attentions to the ballet girls and charged them furiously. It was a pandemonium for about ten minutes, the frightened girls tumbling over chairs, screaming and rushing for shelter into their dressing rooms.

I don't think he would have hurt a single hair of their heads, but it was of no use assuring them that it was "only 'Tom's' idea of fun"—they would have disbelieved me quite as much had I told them he was jealous of their superior attractions—the ballet was upset and there was no more dancing on the stage after that when "Tom" was going through his performance.

I had some queer doings with "Tom" when I had a special engagement at Madrid, but just now I will only mention one as I shall have to return to my Spanish adventures when I deal with performing birds. We returned from Spain via Bordeaux, and while there the donkey was

taken ill. I first noticed that he was not quite himself while performing—he had become groggy about the legs. I decided to send for a veterinary surgeon and I got one, thanks to Pedro Sterling, the interpreter who accompanied the show. The surgeon came, examined the donkey and pronounced him to be too fat. An operation was necessary at once, he declared. No sooner said than done. Plunging a lance into Tom's neck he took therefrom nearly three quarts of blood. Then pulling a hair from Tom's tail he threaded a needle with it and proceeded to sew up the wound! That same night the donkey went through his performance as well as ever. The operation struck me as one of the most singular I had ever seen performed on an animal.

I jump now from Bordeaux to Covent Garden Theatre, under Hengler's management. The box office keeper in those days was a Mr. Hall, a staunch and enthusiastic Liberal. One day he came to me full of importance and quite excited.

"Whimmy," he said, "my dear old friend, Mr. Gladstone, and Mrs. Gladstone and their daughter are coming to the show this afternoon. Do try to say something nice to them."

I wasn't quite sure what Hall meant by "something nice," but I presumed he meant something funny, so I set my wits to work.

What on earth was I to say to Mr. Gladstone that he would consider "nice"? I could think out nothing, so I resolved to leave it to the inspiration of the moment, as I had had to do scores of times before.

The donkey of course was the great attraction,

and he behaved beautifully. Just before "Tom" sang his solo I had a happy thought for the "something nice."

I stepped to the footlights and with a glance at the royal box where sat Mr. Gladstone, I said in my gravest manner,

"Ladies and gentlemen, you will find the beautiful melody 'Tom' is about to oblige you with on the back of the programme."

The people turned over their programmes and quite a flutter of paper went through the house, and Mr. Gladstone stared at his with a face as blank as the back of the programme.

This was where the "cod" came in. There was nothing to be seen!

Then the audience tumbled to the "sell," and laughed and clapped, and so did Mr. Gladstone. His fine face broke into a smile and I really think the "something nice" pleased him.

But "Tom's" great triumph—and mine also, I hope I may say—came on a certain day at Hengler's Circus when it was in Argyle Street. Mr. Hengler came to me with a sort of mystery in his manner and said, "Sir Henry Ponsonby would like to speak to you."

I hardly knew who Sir Henry Ponsonby was, and after I was introduced to him he almost took my breath away by informing me that I was commanded by Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria to appear before her at Windsor Castle with my wonderful donkey! I don't remember what I stammered out, but I know that his reply was that he would give me one month to prepare for the occasion. Of course I thanked him and

for some time after that interview you couldn't touch me or come near me within a hundred feet. I was the greatest man on earth, I thought!

I got new harness, rugs, new blue serge suit for myself—everything new for the donkey—and on the 25th February, 1886, my Royal day, I appeared before Her Majesty. I arrived at Windsor from Paddington early in the morning, and at once went to look at the riding school where the performance was to take place, to make sure that everything was right for my donkey. I found that the floor was covered with tan, and over that a layer of sawdust. I had no objection to this, never thinking that the tan would nearly lead to my undoing. But had I known I could have done nothing.

Three o'clock was my time to appear before Her Majesty, and punctually at the hour she entered the royal box. It was a cold day and a nice fire was burning in the box. Besides the Queen there were three hundred of the household forming the audience.

I made my appearance. "Tom" worked splendidly and in due time his "turn" came, where I placed him in a chair in which he sat with a music stand and a sheet of music before him. The trick was for him to turn the music over with his nose and sing, "Do not forget me." He was very well behaved previous to this, but directly he sat down he became conscious of the peculiar odour of the tan and somehow or other he liked it. He got out of the chair and began smelling the tan floor, and then giving vent to loud sniffs of satisfaction and looking up at me.

Maybe you have seen donkeys make faces, and the faces " Tom " made at me were something grotesque in the extreme. I did my best to pacify him and explain his conduct by such soothing remarks as, " Dear, dear soul—you must have lost something in the tan. Come, dear, I'll find it for you if you'll come and sing."

At last I got him back into the chair and went on :

" Now, darling brother, sing " Do not forget me," and he had just begun to make a little tiny noise when he thought he would have another smell. That did it !

It was very cold—but the perspiration was pouring off me with excitement. He knew very well he was taking advantage of me, because I dared not touch him with a whip. However, I had a little, tiny hand whip and showing him this I said in severe tones, " Come on, now." But he was as silent as an owl excepting for his sniffs, and I had to gag for all I was worth to account for his conduct. The things that came into my mind ! I said he had lost a fourpenny piece, that one of his relatives were buried, and much more nonsense. At last, after a lot of persuasion, he brayed, and the situation to my delight was saved.

As it happened, this bit of unexpected business evidently entertained the Royal party, and at the end of the show her Majesty expressed a wish to see the donkey outside. There are three steps from the Riding School to the entrance and she ascended these steps with the assistance of a little walking stick, looking as I thought remarkably

tiny, but for all this quite queenly. She wanted to know what age was the donkey, and where he had come from and so on. My groom was a German and she spoke to him in his own tongue.

Then she touched the donkey's back with her stick and he began to kick and bray, singing "The Conquering Hero Comes"—so this particular noise was called.

The row proved too much for Her Majesty's endurance and nerves. "Take him away—I have had enough of him," she exclaimed imperiously, and my groom promptly obeyed her, and this ended the show.

"Tom" was despatched to the station and I was about to follow him when Sir Henry Ponsonby came to me saying, "I am going back to Paddington, would you travel in my carriage?"

I thanked him very much and accepted his invitation.

All the way from Windsor to Paddington my thoughts were that everybody would go on their knees to me! I considered myself at that minute as the greatest man living! We reached Paddington and Sir Henry wished me good-bye, thanking me from her Majesty, and entering his brougham, drove off. When I stepped from the carriage, instead of everybody being on their knees, one of the porters stamped on my beautiful patent leather boots and of course on my favourite corn. Oh, the language that followed! Otherwise not a soul took the least bit of notice of me! And that broke my pride!

I have sometimes fancied that had not "Tom" burst into "See the Conquering Hero Comes," her Majesty might have honoured me with a few words as well as my German groom. However, she was gracious enough to send me a diamond pin, which I possess to this day.

CHAPTER IX

I experiment with geese. A goose race in tubs. A fiasco. Sarony, the showman artist-photographer of Scarborough. I begin the training of geese. Their erratic behaviour. They devour the stuffing of the ring fence. Mr. Hengler's indignation. The Sisters Vades and their safety net. The geese make a meal off the net and spoil the turn of the sisters. Their doom pronounced by Mr. Hengler. How they terminated their career. I fail to train a vicious monkey. The late King Edward (then Prince of Wales) at Scarborough—I am permitted to join his shooting party. I arrange a children's cricket match at which the Prince and Dr. W. G. Grace captain the respective sides. I get up a comic cricket match at Hengler's at the Prince's request. I make up as "W. G." and execute a marvellous and unsuspected hit. My horse "Spot" and his dancing on the Scarborough sands. The Scarborough widows.

It is a short step from donkeys to geese. Both are popularly supposed to be stupid, but as a matter of fact they are remarkably intelligent. Another point in common between them is that when they make up their minds to do a thing (or not to do it—generally the latter) they persist in following their own way, and no amount of persuasion can turn them from it.

My first experience of geese was in Ireland. While Hengler's Circus was at Dublin a certain nobleman called on Mr. Powell, Hengler's manager, and asked to see me. I was sent for, introduced to

his lordship, who disclosed the nature of the business which had induced him to seek me out. It was nothing more or less than to act as master of the ceremonies of the Royal Irish Yacht Club at their regatta to be held at Kingston.

It sounded like rather a tall order and a bit out of my line, but when the matter was fully explained it appeared to come within the range of clowning. What I was wanted to do was to superintend a race in tubs drawn by geese. His lordship had seen something of the sort at Yarmouth Regatta, and had been much taken with the sport. It was, of course, no novelty, and if my memory serves me it was first introduced by a celebrated clown, who tried the experiment on the Thames early in the nineteenth century. I could not quite make up my mind, seeing that I knew nothing about geese or tubs, but when it was suggested that I should visit the club the following day and have a champagne lunch and talk the matter over, there really seemed to be something in the idea.

Accordingly I went to the club and learned that it was proposed to have four tubs, each to contain a soldier, and each tub to be drawn by a team of four geese. The scheme did not include me as a performer. I was simply to see that everything was in order, act as starter, etc. So *I* was all right and ran no risk of a ducking. The geese were to do without any training; we were to trust to their intelligence and their appreciation of their duties as entertainers. At the same time, knowing something of the vagaries of the brute creation, I suggested that it would be well to have at least one rehearsal, and this was agreed to.

My first business was to get the tubs and the geese. The tubs were procured easily enough, the purchase of sixteen geese a little more difficult, as I wanted them of the same size as nearly as possible. Luckily geese are plentiful enough in Ireland, as the English well know at Christmas time, and after visiting two or three farms I picked up my team and had them driven to headquarters. It was a sort of rambling procession to the stables, hundreds of delighted children following me and my geese and wondering what all the hubbub and cackling was about.

During the next four days I was busy in having suitable harness made for the geese and in preparing the tubs. The regatta day was on a Friday (nobody reflected how unlucky this choice was) and his lordship fixed the rehearsal for the day before. The sea on Thursday proved to be rather rough and I did not care to take the risk of a failure, so suggested that the rehearsal should be deferred until eight o'clock the following morning, when it would be high tide, and so it was settled.

At the hour appointed we had everything in readiness—the four soldiers, the four tubs and the sixteen geese. They were all eagerly waiting for me and prepared to enter heartily into the fun like true Irish lads. Each soldier had a long cane, with little pieces of ribbon tied to it by way of decoration, to guide the geese with, as of course bits had to be dispensed with, Nature not having provided the necessary teeth.

"Now boys," said I, "directly you see me drop my handkerchief jump into the tubs."

They took up their positions each opposite a tub, their eyes at "attention," fixed on me.

"Are you all ready?" I shouted.

"Yes, sir!"

I dropped the handkerchief. The soldier boys made for the tubs, each one anxious to be first. It was a rare scramble. Thump, thump, I heard, the tubs rocked, the water poured in and swamped them, and then to my consternation I saw the tubs slowly sink, dragging the geese with them. Out jumped the soldiers, who luckily could all swim, and there they were making for the steps on which I was standing helplessly.

It was easy after all was over to account for the mishap. The craft had not been properly ballasted by adequate weights to keep them steady, and the mad rush of the soldiers had destroyed whatever balance the tubs possessed, which wasn't much.

The most mortifying thing was the mirth of the crowd, who were inclined to go for me, looking upon me, I suppose, as a fraud. Anyway, I thought it was best to bolt, and so I did. I made a dash for the railway station, jumped into a train going somewhere—I did not stop to enquire—and that was the end of my engagement as a M.C. of a regatta. The next day I had an interview with his lordship, who good-humouredly accepted my explanation that the roughness of the sea was the cause of the mishap.

I need not point out that in no sense were these geese performing geese, but in justice it must be said that they never had a chance of showing what they could do. My doings with

Whimsical Walker, in his studio, writing his life

Whimsical Walker as old "Daniel Peggotty," in Hepworth's film, "David Copperfield"

properly trained geese came afterwards, when I was with Hengler's at Scarborough. I had some time previously had a trial with game-cocks—their story will find a place later on—but I found they were not to be depended upon, and this led me to turn my attention to geese.

The great man at Scarborough in those days was Sarony. In his way he was quite a genius. He had begun life as a showman—in America, I think—and he was enormously successful not only in the profession in which he started but subsequently as an artist-photographer. He had a sumptuous studio at Scarborough and was patronised by the highest people in society. His photographs certainly were the loveliest things of their kind then to be seen, and his work was well known all over the world.

But in his heart he was the showman, and he looked it—a short, thick-set man with enormously broad shoulders, big muscular throat of which he showed an ample quantity, with his turn-down collar and flowing necktie, his smooth black hair allowed to grow somewhat lengthy, his hawk-like nose, flexible lips and penetrating dark eyes. He always wore the broad brimmed soft felt hat which in those days marked the photographer. His personality was distinctly attractive and he had a way of making himself very engaging, especially to his lady sitters.

He did not forget the showman, even as an artist and photographer. It was a matter of indifference to him how few the number of copies of a photo a customer ordered. He had a formula in reserve which brought him in hundreds of

pounds. The plan was this. Directly a photograph was taken with which he was satisfied—and he was a better judge than the sitter—a lantern transparency was made from the negative. In the meantime, while the transparency was being prepared, he would engage the sitter in his beautifully appointed reception room in fascinating talk, and while bowing him or her out would remark quite casually,

"By the way, here is something which might interest you."

Drawing aside a curtain he would usher his customer into a darkened chamber, at the end of which was a screen on which a life size enlargement of the photograph which had just been taken was thrown. The sitter was naturally overwhelmed with surprise—surprise by the way is the essence of the showman's art. Sarony in his insinuating way would dilate upon the beauty of an enlarged reproduction finished in oils, and it may safely be said that in five cases out of six he landed his fish, and the customer who came in with the intention of spending a five pound note ended in spending twenty times that amount.

But the finished reproduction in oils was well worth the money. Sarony had a painter's studio attached to his establishment and a staff of fine artists to whom he paid very large salaries. He would touch nothing, no matter what he dabbled in, but the best. I may say in passing that no one had a larger clientele of actors and actresses than Sarony of Scarborough, and his portraits, many of which were to be seen in the box office lobbies of theatres, were always greatly admired.

Now Sarony had built a magnificent circus in St. Thomas' Street, Scarborough, and it was there that Hengler's had its pitch, not for one season, but for many. Of a necessity novelties had to be thought out to give the public variety. After a talk on this point with Mr. Hengler, it occurred to me, as animals were always a strong feature in my " business," that something might be done with performing geese.

Accordingly I made a start with a little flock. I adopted the same course of training with them as with my other pupils. Every morning about the same time I went to the circus and gave the geese a lesson which usually lasted about one hour. They were always somewhat erratic and wayward. Sometimes I was very pleased and sometimes just the reverse. They were like the girl who when she was good was very good indeed, and when she was bad she was horrid.

However, I persevered, thinking they would ultimately pay me well. I was mistaken. They brought me little else but trouble. For instance, after the performance at night, knowing that they liked their liberty, I would let them loose and allow them to roam all night in the circus ring until I came in the morning to practise them. One morning when I went into the arena I could have torn my hair with vexation. The game those geese had been up to during that night was, I admit, an undoubted sign of their intelligence, but it also marked their unscrupulousness.

The circus ring fence happened to be padded with hay, covered over with valuable red plush, which had cost a considerable sum per yard. The geese

soon discovered there was something underneath the plush which suited their palate and industriously going to work they literally riddled the plush with holes to get at the hay. I was too dismayed to say anything and I let Mr. Hengler make the discovery.

He came in. He looked round. He saw the scene of devastation. An awful frown wrinkled his brows.

" What does it all mean ? " he thundered. " I take a pride in making my circus look as beautiful as a drawing room and I find it like *this*. Who will give me an explanation ? "

A dead silence followed, broken presently by one of the frightened grooms, who muttered tremblingly,

" Please, sir, I think Mr. Walker's geese have done it."

I was called before Mr. Hengler. He was very angry indeed and I had to go through it. Of course, he had a right to call me over the coals as it meant the spending of money to put things as they were. However, all he visited me with was an injunction that while I was allowed to do what I liked with the geese during the day, I must not allow them to roam at large in the ring or elsewhere at night. So on the whole I got off very lightly. For the rest of the time the geese at night were put to bed in a large crate.

Somehow the spirit of mischief possessed the creatures, and no sooner was their exploit with the plush over than they started at thinking out some fresh devilry. Mr. Hengler about this time engaged two handsome and clever lady trapeze artists, the Sisters Vades. They performed with the usual

protection in the shape of a net stretched beneath the trapeze. They started their turn and all went well until the following Saturday, when the net was pulled down and was placed on the top of the crate where the geese were kept, and here it remained all Saturday night, Sunday and Monday. No one gave a thought to it, save the geese, who all the while were thinking deeply.

The time came for the commencement of the preparations for the performance of the Sisters Vades. The net was taken from the top of the crate and—horror !—half of it had been eaten away. The geese had found their opportunity and had made use of it. But their digestions—they could hardly have been less powerful than those of ostriches !

The sisters could not perform without the net and when Mr. Hengler was told that they were unable to appear he sternly demanded the reason.

Again the reply, "Walker's geese." It was becoming monotonous.

A row followed, and the upshot was that the geese were condemned, to my intense chagrin and disappointment, for I was really looking forward to making something of them and out of them.

Their end was in a way a sort of Nemesis. I was invited by the Sisters Vades to dine with them and their manager. The principal dish was roast goose—one of *my* geese ! So in this way the ladies had their revenge. It was a fitting one.

I had another failure with animals while at Scarborough. This time it was a monkey. Mr. Clark, who was performing with a troupe of animals, made me a present of a monkey which he could

do nothing with. I suppose that was why he gave it to me. I tried my hardest with the little beast, but he was either stupid or untameable. I looked about for someone to pass it on to, and I thought of Mr. Morgan, who was then Mayor of Scarborough, and who was at the time running the Aquarium, one of the attractions of the place being a cage of monkeys. Mr. Morgan thought companionship would be beneficial to my monkey and he accepted it.

Mr. Morgan sent a couple of sailors with a sack to fetch the monkey and a rare job they had. They chased him all over the loft and had to be extremely spry and wary, as the creature was very vicious. However, at last he was captured, thrust somehow into the sack, carried to the Aquarium and put with the other monkeys. He had not been with them two hours or so before the harmony of the home was entirely upset. I had an agonised message somewhat to this effect:

"For Heaven's sake come and take away *your* monkey. He's killing all *our* monkeys!"

I could only see one answer to this and I made it. My reply was:

"Quite impossible. The monkey was a gift to you. I'm too much of a gentleman to take back a gift."

I don't know whether the people at the Aquarium took this view of the matter. Anyhow, they found a speedy way out of the difficulty. They shot the monkey.

Happily all this ill-luck at Scarborough was more than compensated by the fortunate chance which sent the late King Edward, then Prince

of Wales, to the Yorkshire watering place during the shooting season. I was at Hengler's for a six weeks' engagement and I rather think I was sent down to do my best to entertain Royalty. Among the Prince's party were the Earl of Londesborough, Sir Charles Legard and Dr. W. G. Grace. I had a right royal time as I was often "commanded" to be one of the shooting party. Nobody could be a more delightful host than our late King. He aimed at being happy himself and in making other people happy.

I shall never forget when passing through Seamer, a little village a few miles out of Scarborough, the Prince turning to me as a crowd of children were swarming out of school and saying:

"Walker, can't you get up a cricket match with the children?"

A word was as good as a wink to me, and I got all the kiddies together and took them into a cricket field at the back of a little roadside inn (kept, by the way, by a namesake of mine but no relation) which was rather a noted place for cricket matches.

No one knew the Prince was of the party and he picked his side without anything occurring to embarrass him. He was opposed by Dr. Grace, and for half an hour the game was kept up, his Royal Highness evidently enjoying himself to the utmost.

When the sport was over the party went back to Londesborough Lodge, and in the course of the evening the Prince said to me,

"Walker, we're coming to see you at the circus to-night at about 9 o'clock."

"All right, your Highness," said I. "What would you like me to do?"

"Can't you get up something to please the doctor?" (*i.e.*, Dr. Grace).

"I'll do my best," was my answer, and I left the Royal party at that.

The idea in my mind was a burlesque cricket match, but there wasn't too much time to prepare the "business"—about an hour, as a matter of fact. I made myself a huge bat against which no ball could have a possible chance unless I chose to give one, and—I made up as the celebrated and popular "W. G."

The Royal party arrived—the Prince and Princess of Wales, Lord and Lady Londesborough, Miss Sykes, Sir Charles Legard, Dr. Grace and many others—and took their seats. I needn't go over the comic business that the mock cricketers, all made up as clowns, indulged in. I need only say that our fooling seemed to please the distinguished visitors immensely. The hit—in more senses than one—came when I, as Dr. Grace, armed with my huge bat, took my place at the wicket. The bowler sent me down a "yorker" and I went for the ball (it was made of worsted) for all I was worth. I intended to swoop it among the gallery people, but somehow it glided off my hat and went straight for Dr. Grace, who had to field it whether he would or no. I guess his hands went up by instinct. Such peals of laughter, yells of applause, clapping of hands and stamping of feet as were sent up I never heard in any theatre.

Maybe some of the audience thought the thing was intentional, but it wasn't. It was purely accidental. After the performance was over I was called to the Prince, who, with a merry twinkle in his eye, wanted to know how long the doctor and I had been arranging the hit and the catch. The only explanation I could give, I said, was that the thing was a miracle. He looked at me with a humorous expression as though he would have said, "Ananias." I don't think he really believed me, but for all that the incident was exactly as I have related it.

One more reminiscence and I have done with Scarborough. I used to go there year after year, as I had become a favourite with the visitors and they always expected some novelty from me. One year I went day after day opposite the Spa, and when the tide was out and Herr Meyer Lutz's fine band was playing, I would give the people a treat with my performing horse, "Spot." He was a black and white, and a very clever dancer to music. I always wore a frock coat, plaid trousers, and a tall silk hat, and I styled myself the "Duke of Scorby Mills."

As the tide came rolling up, "Spot," at a little sign from me, would roll down in the sea with me in my Rotten Row attire, to the huge delight of the spectators. In the afternoon it was pleasant pastime to mash some of the widows. I don't think I was much to blame as Scarborough abounded in widows, and if you didn't mash them they would mash you. One fascinating widow, whose acquaintance I made, ran me up a nice little hotel bill. Her money was always coming

from South America, but somehow it never made its appearance, and then she vanished. Maybe she went back to South America, and got drowned on the voyage, as I never heard from her. But I preserved the hotel receipts as a memento. The moral is that every man who spends his holiday in Scarborough should keep the elder Mr. Weller's advice in mind, " Bevare of vidders."

CHAPTER X

I am engaged to appear at Madrid. Something about my wonderful game-cock. Cock fighting in London in the 'Eighties! The secret of an Endell Street cellar. How I obtained the bird. A match between myself and the game-cock. An Argyle Street show which took the town. A trying journey to Madrid. The trials of Spanish etiquette. Am invited by Royality to a bull fight. The singing donkey creates a furore. Also the game-cock "turn." My *gallio* challenged by a Spanish champion. The fight comes off. The Spaniard defeated. The Spanish game-cock fanciers anxious to secure my bird. I adopt precautions for his safety. Difficulties in the way of returning home. I succeed by a ruse in escaping.

WHEN Hengler's Circus was at Argyle Street I had an offer to go to Madrid. I imagined that my reputation, or that of my donkey, had reached the Spanish capital, but after I had had personal experience of the taste of the Spaniards I came to the conclusion that a part of the attraction was due to a remarkable game-cock of which I had become possessed and which I had trained to be an important member of my little troupe. The Spaniards, I afterwards discovered, loved to see cock-fighting.

I suppose one-half, or more, of the people in London do not know how the other half live. Certainly so far as amusement, and especially sport, is concerned this is the case. I guess that if you care to pay for it you can get in London any pleasure you like, whether outside the law or not. When I say that during the 'Eighties cock-fighting went on in London, it is possible that I shall be accused of telling a tarradiddle, but it was the absolute fact.

One of my friends in those days was Charlie Best, who then was proprietor of the "Horseshoe," in the Tottenham Court Road. Mr. Best was a great lover of sport, and among other fancies had a liking for cock-fighting. This once aristocratic amusement was supposed to be a thing of the past, but it wasn't, and some of the young bloods of the "Upper Ten," who knew mine host of the "Horseshoe," were eager to be patrons when it was whispered to them that they could take part in a revival of the cockpit of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Of course every precaution was taken to secure secrecy, and no one who passed along prosaic Endell Street ever suspected that in a cellar underneath a certain ironmonger's shop (I think the name was Faltless) noble lords and their friends used thrice a month to assemble in this subterranean retreat and excite themselves over matches between game-cocks. Such, however, was the fact, and many a time I was among the spectators as a friend of Charlie Best. That betting went on goes without saying. A cock-fight without anything "on" is unthinkable.

Most people know what the cock-pits of a hundred years and more ago were like. The old coloured prints of such places are numerous enough—an arena with a ring fence of a yard or so in height, behind which the owners of the birds and their friends sat, and a gallery above for the public. This cock-pit was not at all that kind of thing. It had a sort of arena, it was true, but this was all.

The game-cock owned by Mr. Best was a marvel and I broke the tenth commandment over him constantly. Mr. Best, you must know, ran the refreshment buffet at Hengler's, so that I was very intimate with him, and I think I advertised him and his Bass pretty well among the hosts of people who came to call upon me. I wanted that bird very much indeed. I had an idea that I could make good use of him in the circus, especially as a comic show for the children, and at last Mr. Best gave him to me, after he had won seven battles, as a return for my pushing his business.

Directly I had the bird in my possession I went to a very clever theatrical property maker named Hessan and arranged with him to make me a huge cock dress of the colours exactly similar to those of the bird. He set to work and succeeded in producing a really wonderful property dress. Then I started training the game-cock.

Perhaps it mayn't be generally known that the cock-birds of this species have a language of their own. Well, they have, and I studied it. Listen to his cry. As nearly as it can be put on paper it sounds like "Krrrrrrr." That means he is calling his wives together, and he soon shows them that he is master of his harem.

Wearing my cock dress I took the bird to the arena and burst into a song as nearly like "Krrrrrrr" as I could make it. He at once suspected the presence of a hated rival. He pricked up his head as if he were saying, "Hallo, what's this massive brute?" He went for me as fiercely as though I'd been one of his own size. I pretended to be afraid. I ran away. He came after me, pecking at me savagely, and we dodged each other all over the ring.

Then I began to take off my garments one by one to let him know who I was, and in a month or so I allowed him to think he was my master. I used to keep him in a little square box and feed him on raw meat, port wine, and oats. Nobody but myself was allowed to touch him and he knew his business as if I had trained a child. I had him for many years and he has caused me many a pain. Poor boy, he died with the croup, but was very, very vicious. I never saw such a bird as he. No fun about him when he was fighting me—he meant it—and he used to hang on like a bull-dog. I buried the poor bird in Dublin. I have tried to train a lot more, but directly they get in the footlights they are no good.

But before he died he greatly distinguished himself, and nowhere more than in Madrid, and of my visit to which city I will try to say something. Besides my game-cockerel I had with me my two invaluable donkeys. Knowing not a word of Spanish I had to take with me an interpreter, one Pedro Sterling, who was half a Spaniard. I need not say that with my oddly assorted companions my journey was full of difficulties. How-

ever, we got safely to Paris, and from the Gare du Nord we had to cross Paris to reach another station to get down south. However, after some little trouble this was accomplished, the donkeys and the cockerel travelling in a van together with a tin pail for the donkeys to drink from.

The journey to the Spanish frontier was not marked by any particular incident, but when we arrived at Antondy, a little town on the frontier, the railway people for some reason which didn't seem very clear refused to take us any further, and we had to stop in the town until the next morning.

Pedro Sterling found an hotel, the proprietor of which agreed to accommodate our little party —donkeys, cockerel and two beds for myself and Pedro. The hotel was by no means inviting, but we had to make the best of things. It was built of wooden piles and the donkeys had to share a shed with some cows. We managed to swallow some supper, but it was by no means appetising—simply bread and lard, no butter!

As we passed through the saloon—so-called—a dirty ill-lighted place, three villainous-looking Spaniards, black as ink, scowled at us and fixed their eyes—so it seemed to me—on my gold chain, a rather massive affair on which I set great store. We reached our bedroom, a squalid chamber enough, with one small window about eighteen inches square. We got into bed and the interpreter was soon fast asleep. I, on the contrary, could not get a wink for thinking of the Spaniards of the cut-throat aspect. However, I suppose I misjudged them, for nothing happened.

I turned out about 5.30, feeling done up, for I had had practically no rest since I left London on Sunday night, and it was now Wednesday morning. We reached the station in good time and waited an hour for the train, which when it came along proved to be chiefly for luggage with three coaches only for passengers.

We settled the donkeys in a miserable horse truck along with the cockerel, the tin pail and a quantity of hay and corn, and my boxes. I was so tired I laid down on the hay and straw by the side of the donkeys rather than travel in an uncomfortable carriage crowded with people. So I was locked in the horse box, dark and stuffy as it was. No window was provided, only a little hole about a foot square for ventilation.

The horn sounded and the train started. It crawled at about two miles an hour and for what it lacked in speed it made up in rattling and bumping. It was impossible to sleep. The horse box had no springs and the pail at once began to dance about, so did the donkeys, the cockerel and the boxes. I found myself doing a sort of jig *a la* a parched pea in a frying pan. I shall never forget it.

The train stopped at every station and I tried to get out, but it was impossible. I yelled for Pedro Sterling, but he never heard me. I had to suffer being shaken up like dice until we reached San Sebastian, when I had a happy release, but only on making a signal of distress by pushing the tin pail through the ventilating hole and shaking it.

I found Pedro confortable enough with a Spanish gentleman whose acquaintance he had made, seated opposite to him.

After giving the donkeys water and seeing that they were all right, I joined Pedro, and the train went on to Madrid. I gave Pedro a graphic account of my sufferings and he told our fellow passenger, in Spanish of course. The Spaniard expressed his sympathy and through Pedro enquired whether I would like a little wine. There was nothing I felt at that moment I would like better and Pedro conveyed my assent, upon which the Spanish gentleman brought out a beautiful skin with a gold mouthpiece attached.

I hadn't the least idea how to drink out of this native bottle and Pedro Sterling explained. You are not supposed to put the mouthpiece to your lips, but to hold it an inch or two away. Pedro then showed me the operation. Clearly my interpreter was an expert and as he did it the trick seemed easy enough. I held up the mouthpiece, wished the don "good health," in English, and started to drink. Unluckily the stream missed the target—instead of going into my mouth it hit my eyes and my nose, and finished by running down my shirt front.

This was bad enough, but what was much worse, I had outraged Spanish etiquette, which I afterwards found was extremely rigid. The gentleman did not laugh, though I must have presented a ludicrous sight, but regarded my awkwardness as an insult to himself! Pedro had all his work cut out to convince the Spaniard that the mishap was purely an accident, but at last he succeeded.

We arrived at Madrid about seven o'clock the next morning. We were expected; a carriage and pair were awaiting us and we were driven to the

hotel, the donkeys and cockerel being taken to the circus. I had not been at the hotel many hours before I was made acquainted with the courtesy which Spaniards of noble birth and high rank display towards visitors. Queen Isabella actually sent a dignified gentleman belonging to the suite to enquire if I would like to see a bull-fight!

I was overwhelmed with the royal politeness and I said that I certainly should. Then the question was put as to which day I should prefer for my performance at the circus. I asked which was the best day and was told "Sunday." "Very good," said I, "Sunday for me."

I went to the bull-fight and I must say that I was greatly impressed by the imposing spectacle. Thousands of people, most of them ladies, many of them exquisitely dressed, from the highest to the lowest, were seated tier upon tier round an enormous arena. A clear blue sky was overhead and the brilliant sunshine heightened the colours of the decorations and the gay costumes of the picadors and matadors.

Bull-fights have been described many times, so I will say no more than that I was sorry for the horses. Many of them were poor old crocks who hadn't the slightest chance of avoiding the bull's horns. I saw twenty-seven of them killed. As for the riders, they were protected by what might be termed thigh boots of steel. These protections had one drawback—they were so heavy that when the wearer fell he couldn't get up again, but had to be dragged away by one party of attendants while another deviated the attention of the bull.

I was told that if there was any deficiency of

horses the organisers had the power to commandeer any which might be in the streets, no matter how valuable. The bull-fights being State affairs, remonstrance was useless in such a case.

The killing of the bull struck me as rather repulsive. Fortunately it was very rapidly done—just a thrust of the sword at the back of the neck and the animal fell dead, its spinal cord severed. What struck me as curious was the mad enthusiasm of the spectators, who at the termination of the performance cast their garments, coats, hats, waistcoats, etc., into the arena. This did not mean that they were given away. Not at all. Every article had to be returned to the rightful owner. Anxious to show that the English were not wanting in politeness, I interested myself in the work of restoration, but chancing to give a coat to the wrong person, who received it with a cold and scornful glance, I decided to get away as soon as possible lest I should unintentionally violate some unwritten law of Spanish etiquette and suffer in consequence.

Spanish etiquette I found was a wonderful and fearful thing. Luckily I had Pedro at hand to help me over the pitfalls. I was told, for instance, that if you admired a thing very much—a jewel, a picture, a horse or what not—the owner would gravely say, "It is yours, Senor." But woe betide you if you take him at his word! This wasn't in the contract at all. The apparent gift was politeness—nothing more.

Before I gave my first performance I had to consider what Spanish words I should put into my donkey's mouth which my audience would appre-

ciate. I decided after consultation upon *De bouro canto patterneris.*

When I announced this and my donkey " Tom " sang it or was supposed to sing it, I never heard such an uproar of applause as broke out in all parts of the house. The audience wouldn't have the next turn on the performance. It was the donkey and nothing but the donkey that they wanted. " Take him in again," urged the manager, " take him in again." So I took him not once but several times, and made him bow his thanks, but this did not satisfy his admirers. " Canto! Canto!" they kept on shouting. However, I knew " Tom " wouldn't sing again until after half an hour's interval, so I pacified them by introducing my fighting game-cockerel.

As it happened I couldn't have done better. Three things the Spanish people love above all else—bull-fighting, cock-fighting, and music. That was why, I fancy, my donkey with his lovely baritone voice pleased them so much. Could he only have played a guitar he would have been there maybe to this day!

The day following my first performance, whether due to my neglect of Spanish precaution—they never go out of doors in the hottest part of the day, and they are right, for the sun pours down perpendicularly upon you and there isn't an atom of shadow anywhere — or to the too liberal hospitality which I was obliged to accept, I was taken unwell. The one complaint which leaps up in every Spaniard's mind when you have the stomach-ache is the cholera. They dread it as much as the devil is said to dread holy water!

So when I did not feel quite up to the mark I was afraid I was in for the cholera.

A physician was sent for, and believe me, I never encountered a more competent doctor or one who adopted better remedies. Said he:

"There is nothing the matter with the gentleman. Give him some wine!"

I swallowed a dose of this pleasant physic and was well almost directly. All the same I ran great risks, for I was invited out to supper every night and Spanish dishes are not only savoury but ample.

Apart from risks of indigestion there was a drawback to those suppers. They kept me out until the small hours in the morning, and then owing to the customs of the country you were likely to find yourself in a fix. In Madrid you can get out of your domicile at any time of the night, but you can't get in without calling out to the watchman to open the gates for you. These watchmen patrol the streets with a long pole and a lantern quite in the style of the old English "Charlies," but they are not nearly so decrepit, although they appear to be more so if you don't tip them. In such a case they'll take half an hour or more to crawl three yards. I needn't say that my hand went to my pocket without the slightest hesitation and the fellow would come along like a lightning flash.

The Spanish Court was exceedingly good to me. Queen Isabella came to the show more than once and I fancy she enjoyed it more than she did the behaviour of the audience. Some political

act on the part of Her Majesty had displeased the public and the house showed its feelings by an unmistakable hiss when she entered the royal box. But she heard the objectionable sound unmoved. The Queen's presence was not the only sign of royal favour that I received. On one occasion I was permitted to hold King Alphonso, then a baby, in my arms. I attribute these marks of appreciation not so much on account of my own performance as of that of my donkeys. Donkeys are an institution in Spain.

After a time I found my fighting cockerel—*gallio* was the Spanish term—went down even better than the donkeys, if such a thing were possible. My first performance when I introduced my fighting scene was a screaming success, and was followed by a totally unexpected sequel. The next morning while I was receiving my letters my interpreter came up with rather a formidable-looking Spaniard, who had something concealed under his coat which gave out a noise which sounded as though he had a knife and was sharpening a slate pencil. It turned out that he had brought with him a fighting game-cock.

Said Pedro Sterling: "This Spaniard wants to challenge your *gallio* to fight his *gallio*."

I looked rather serious at this strange proposition and pointed out that I had not brought my bird to Madrid in order to fight. He was part of my living and I had trained him to fight me and not other birds.

But this explanation did not satisfy the Spaniard. He was immensely proud of the prowess of his

bird and he was burning to see the insolent invader bite the dust at the feet of the native product.

I wasn't having any and I still demurred, but the man continued to insist, and at last Sterling said: "Why not let him have a go." But my answer was "No." Then Pedro made the puzzling suggestion: "Let his bird put on the boxing gloves."

"Boxing gloves," I exclaimed. "What the deuce do you mean?"

He explained that in Spain fighting-cocks were provided with glove stalls stuffed with wool and fitted on to the spurs, so that they could not hurt each other. This put a different complexion on the matter and I agreed.

The contrast between the two gladiators when they were placed opposite each other was the oddest thing possible. My beautiful bird was at the time in lovely plumage—he was what is called an Indian black red game-cock. But his opponent—I never saw such a funny-looking thing. He was of the Spanish red variety plucked the same as a fowl ready for dinner, except for a frill of feathers which had been left as an ornament for his neck.

They went at it tooth and nail. The fight lasted hardly a minute; feathers began to fly and it was all over except shouting. The Spaniard was about to pick up his bird, thinking no doubt that the native champion had had enough, when my bird hit him with his spurs and wings and laid him out. I don't believe such a scowl was ever seen on man's face as that which wrinkled the

Spaniard's countenance, and he burst out into some Spanish Seven Dials' language which I didn't understand a bit but the meaning of which I could very well guess. I haven't the least doubt Pedro interpreted the jargon correctly when he said: "He'll have his revenge or steal your fighting bird."

The fame of the fight spread and the circus was crowded every night to see my *gallio.* He became the source of great anxiety to me. I was perpetually haunted by the fear of losing him or of his suffering some injury. I had to take him to my hotel every night and bring him back for the next performance. For an extra precaution I paid a man ten pesetas a week to watch and guard him. As a matter of fact all the cock fanciers in Madrid were after him. But he passed through these perils unscathed and in the end I got him away safely.

My engagement terminated and I was anxious to return home. A passport, of course, was necessary, and I called on the British Consul. To my surprise he said:

"Why do you wish to leave? The Spaniards love you and they want you to stay in Madrid."

Whether he said this on his own account or that pressure had been put on him by someone I can't say, but a month went over before that passport arrived. Meanwhile, I had exceeded my engagement and even then the circus people were very reluctant to let me go. In order to get out of the country I wired to my wife who was in Ireland with Hengler's Circus to send me a message running something like this: "Wife ill; return immediately to England." The message came and on the

strength of it I was allowed to leave. It was on the way home that my donkey had the curious operation performed on him at Bordeaux which I have already described.

CHAPTER XI

Odds and ends of circus life. The "peep show" cooking stoves. How I "had" Lord Randolph Churchill in Dublin. I distinguish myself at a sham fight. An unscrupulous practical joker. Faked up "Zulu" warriors and how the fraud was discovered. The story of a Birmingham Christmas pudding. My trick canary that failed. A day's fishing on a yacht.

Circus life is full of odds and ends, most of them quite unexpected. I can't recall all of the adventures and misadventures which happened to me in the many years I was connected with the various travelling and touring shows, but a few occur to me which I will try to set down.

When I was on one of Hengler's visits to Dublin there was a horse show in Kildare Street which lasted three days, and Mr. William Powell, Hengler's manager, Mr. Fred Gallagher and myself were invited on the opening day. Under a verandah to which one ascended by a dozen stairs or so was a collection of all the latest novelties which could be got together, and one was an American paraffin

cooking stove. Such things are now, of course, in every-day use, but at that time no one in Ireland knew anything about them, though I dare say they were well known in England and elsewhere. They were about a foot and a half square, made of zinc, with a little paraffin lamp underneath and a small hole to let the steam out.

I was always on for a joke whenever I saw a chance, and on my eyes lighting on this contrivance something prompted me to bend down, look through this hole and pretend I was seeing a sort of peep show. It really was much more like a showman's box at a fair than a stove.

With my face as solemn as a judge's I murmured loud enough for the people round about to hear! "What a battle scene! Just like real life. Look at the horses galloping! By George, they're going right across the mountains!"

This was enough to stimulate the curiosity of a crowd eager to see everything that was to be seen. Before very long I was thrust aside by an impatient group who thought I had monopolised the show sufficiently and declared that it was their turn to look. The expressions of disgust which came over their faces when they found they had been "had" was enough to make a cat laugh. But many did not like to show that they had been fooled and without saying anything they moved away and waited for other victims. I dare say hundreds were taken in and I enjoyed the game so much that I kept it up on the two following days.

In a space below, near the foot of the staircase, some of the horses were stationed, and visitors after inspecting these would generally mount the

staircase. On the third day the word was passed round that Mr. Dawson, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, and Lord Randolph Churchill were coming, and the man from America who had charge of the stoves, said to me:

"If you can only get the Lord Mayor and Lord Randolph Churchill to look through the hole my cooking stoves are made."

I thought that if this were brought off it would be rather a triumph for me too and I said I'd see what I could do. Presently quite a crowd were waiting to see the distinguished visitors ascend the staircase and I was waiting too. They arrived, and as was hoped, they stopped in front of the stove through the hole of which I was intently gazing.

"Well," said his lordship, the Mayor, "and what have you got there?"

I did not answer the question, but merely asked him to peep through the hole, which he did. With a blank look on his face he turned to me saying:

"I can't see anything."

"Exactly," was my reply, "who said you could?"

No one is quicker to take a joke than an Irishman. The Lord Mayor tumbled to the fake instantly and he whispered:

"A capital joke. Get my friend Lord Randolph to look through."

I did, and directly the noble lord had his eye at the peephole and was trying with all his might to see something, the people who had been "had" set up a mighty "Hurrah!" and clapped their

hands vigorously at the addition of another victim.

Unfortunately the sudden noise frightened the horses below. Mr. Powell, who was with them, yelled out " Hop it ! " I took his advice and the police, for some reason thinking there was going to be a disturbance, went for me. As I darted down the stairs I caught my foot in a bucket of water which had been placed for the horses and down I went. I suppose I was in the mood that day for mad pranks, for the next thing I did was to pretend to have a fit.

The sympathising crowd gathered round. No one knew exactly what to do, but they suggested everything they could think of. Among the would-be helpers was an Irish attendant, who exclaimed :

" Sure an' it's a shame it is to see a fellow creature in disthress. It's more air that he wants," and forthwith proceeded to drag open my shirt.

I had on a beautiful tie and pin, but these made no difference to the warm-hearted Irishman. He stuck his fingers in my collar and without wasting time in unbuttoning it—gosh !—tore it apart in his anxiety to give me air. I saw my pin and tie going. I grabbed both, sprang to my feet and was through the door in a flash, leaving the police, the crowd and the warm-hearted Irishman to make what they could of my wild proceedings.

The little string of fooleries didn't end there. Jumping into a jaunting car I drove to Corlis's restaurant and took refuge there, for the crowd were tearing after my car. As I did not make my appearance the mob got tired and dispersed ;

I then came out and went on to the Abbey Hotel. As I took my seat in the dining room a waiter passed me with a beautiful chop, bread and potatoes. He was taking it to some other diner and the sight was too much for me. Looking him sternly in the face I exclaimed,

"You've been a long time cooking that chop."

"I'm very sorry, sir—I——"

"Sorry be hanged. I've been waiting a deuce of a while and I'm very hungry."

He placed the chop before me and I ate it then and there. How long the other man had to wait I can't say. Of course it was rather rough on him and I would have apologised had I dared.

I ought to add that the hoax that had been played on the Lord Mayor and Lord Randolph Churchill soon got wind, and that night when I performed at the circus the audience gave me a great reception and nothing was heard for some few minutes but cries of "Cooking stoves—cooking stoves," and no less would satisfy them than my sending for a stove to show how Churchill had been "had," in which I had an advertisement as well as the stoves.

While at Dublin I was invited to Phœnix Park to see a sham fight. I was accompanied by all Mr. Hengler's company on horseback. Of course, I being a well-known character, they gave me one of the worst horses to ride. The brute was called "Merryman" and he was in every sense well named. Directly the guns went off he bolted —I was round his back—over his head—hatless— and I thought my time had come. Out of sheer

merriment, I suppose, he took me among the soldiers, and there was a rare hubbub till the colonel of the regiment ordered me up to his side. I thought he was going to send me to the castle to be shot, but instead of that he kept me by him in the midst of the fighting, to the great joy of the spectators. To see me flying about with frock coat over my head—sometimes with my arms clutching the horse's mane and sometimes apparently making for his tail—I was a huge success.

Practical joking seems to be part and parcel of circus life. The most inveterate practical joker I ever knew was a man named Dan Leeson. He was my travelling companion and we used to go shares in the apartments in the various towns where the circus stopped, board, etc. But occasionally his jokes went beyond the limit.

I have seen him go out in the morning, buy a mackerel, cut it open and fill it full of gunpowder. He would then with a needle and thread sew it up again, take it home to the landlady, and tell her to put it on the gridiron for breakfast. You can imagine the result. Half the chimney blown away, soot coming down, landlady in hysterics, police, fire engines, etc., etc. Sometimes he would go into a public house and get a glass of beer and a bit of cheese and biscuit. The cheese having been cut in squares, he would buy some soap and cut it also in squares, mix it with the cheese, and sit down and await the result. The grimaces and contortions of the victims who tasted the soap seemed to give him a morbid satisfaction.

Leeson reached the limit in an outrageous prank he played in a Liverpool theatre. Stuffing a piece of haddock in one of the sound holes of the double bass he awaited the outcome. It wasn't long before the haddock showed signs of its presence. Its offence was rank and smelt to heaven. The orchestra became conscious of its vile odour, and complaints reached the manager, but of course the cause was not suspected. A manager doesn't as a rule consider the feelings of the orchestra, and pooh-poohed their grumblings. It was a different matter when the haddock became more lively; the stallites sniffed, and whispers began to be current that something was wrong with the drains of the ———— theatre. The sanitary inspector was called in, and an investigation was made. The flooring was torn up, pipes opened, but nothing resulted beyond a long bill which the proprietor received with a long face. Gradually the decomposition of the haddock was completed and the nuisance ceased. Many months afterwards the secret oozed out. But by that time the author of the unpleasant hoax was far away. My impression is that there was a kink in Leeson's brain, and I'm glad that my association with him did not last long. I believe he finished his career where he had few opportunities of exercising his fiendish power of invention. It was said he died in prison.

The influence of clowning is very difficult to shake off. It gets into the blood and pursues one outside the theatre. The essence of harlequinade humour is practical joking, and no matter

All ready to appear before the British Public,
Drury Lane Theatre Pantomime

where the clown may be he finds it hard to resist a chance of taking someone in after the fashion of footlights fun. At least I found it to be so; anyhow, here is a case in point.

Some theatrical friends and myself were enjoying ourselves one afternoon in a certain Yorkshire hotel, and the proprietor, Mr. B——, formed one of our party. We were ensconced in his private parlour, but with my usual restlessness, I kept wandering in and out of the room searching for something which might afford material for a practical joke. The rollicking spirit of mischief possessed me. In the corridor I espied several pairs of boots which I knew belonged to the proprietor. Putting a pair of these in the pockets of my overcoat I went back to the parlour.

"Here, Mr. B——," I remarked, "we know, old man, that you're not a bad sort. When I was outside the hotel just now a rather well-dressed chap accosted me, said he was hard-up, and offered to sell me these boots, which he says are relics of his better days. They won't fit me, but they seem just about your size. Try 'em on, and see if you can do the poor fellow a good turn."

The proprietor, who was rather short-sighted, immediately took off his slippers, tried on the boots and declared they fitted perfectly—which no doubt they did, seeing he had worn them many times.

"Delighted!" exclaimed Mr. B——, "I'll have them. Give the poor fellow this half sovereign, and tell him I'll keep the boots."

Out came half a sovereign, and I departed in search of the supposed starving man, whose heart-

felt thanks I brought back with me to the beaming proprietor, who was highly gratified to be able to do a kind action. Of course, we kept up the joke for some time, and when it was played out and the half sovereign was returned, the host insisted on spending it in refreshments for the company.

It may be that the " fakes " and dodges that showmen are so clever in concocting stimulate an unnatural sort of ingenuity which may well foster practical joking. Showmen are certainly past masters in the art of " codding." I recollect at the time of the Zulu war how one showman conceived the idea of exhibiting a number of Zulu warriors. There was only one drawback—not a single Zulu was at that moment in the country. But drawbacks do not exist for the born showman and a party of ordinary niggers were easily made up into Cetewayo's savage soldiery.

The arrangement of the " war-dance " one of them executed really had a touch of genius about it. The place of exhibition was a penny show. There were no seats and the visitors walked about where they liked. When the " war-dance " was about to begin, the exhibitor, in that impressive manner which only a showman can put on, warned everybody that the " Zulu " about to flourish his assegai was very dangerous and that every precaution would be taken, but that to be on the safe side the spectators had better keep at a respectful distance.

This was enough to send a pleasant thrill through the gaping crowd and the " precaution " which followed heightened expectations. The warrior

in his native undress with a piece of skin—supposed to be from a lion—stalked in, assegai in hand, and gave a fiendish grin. Then a strong leather belt was put about his waist and having attached to it four stout ropes placed, so to speak, at the four points of the compass. Four men held the ropes so that the savage couldn't stir from the spot on which he was put. Then he started waving his spear, contorting his body, stamping with his bare feet and uttering unearthly howls expressive of his bloodthirsty desires. Although the ropes held him stationary there was nothing to prevent him hurling his assegai, but this risk only added to the excitement, and when the performance was over the audience departed quite satisfied that they had witnessed the real thing.

On one occasion this troupe of "Zulus" were let down badly. The show was at a seaport town and among the sightseers was a number of sailors who had just come from South Africa, who had been up country and knew something of the Zulu lingo. They began to talk to the performers in what was supposed to be their native tongue, and the niggers, who had come from any part of Africa save Zululand, were nonplussed. If there is one thing Jack hates it is being taken in, and they went for the Zulus, the proprietor and the show. There wasn't much of the latter left whole when they had finished.

I never could resist having a lark when the impulse and the opportunity came together. They did so on one occasion at Birmingham. After the death of Sir Augustus Harris, Mr. Henry Dundas, his partner, produced the Drury Lane pantomime

at the Birmingham Theatre, and we had a rehearsal on Christmas Day. After the first part of the rehearsal Frank Davies, the stage manager, and I, went to a neighbouring hotel for some refreshment, which we had in the dining room. As we were leaving we passed the dinner lift, which descended to the kitchen, at the very moment when an appetising Christmas pudding made its appearance on the little platform.

The sight was irresistible, and before the pudding had time to vanish it was safely inside my Inverness. I expect the clown instinct was to blame. Anyhow, we went off to the theatre wishing the hotel proprietor a " jolly Christmas " as we went out of the hotel. We ate the pudding on the stage and when the rehearsal was over we went back to the hotel for tea. The proprietor was rather ratty, and, full of sympathy, we enquired the reason. He told us that he and his staff had been done out of their Christmas pudding through the misbehaviour of the cook.

" When it didn't come," he explained, " I called the cook, who swore she had sent it up. I told her she'd been drinking and sacked her at a minute's notice.

We hadn't bargained for this. I'm afraid it didn't occur to us that the cook would get into a row, and we told him what had become of the pudding, thinking he would see the joke. But he was as blind as a bat, angrier than ever, and talked about prosecuting us for theft! The story became known: it got into the papers under the heading, " Who stole the Christmas pudding?" and maybe the advertisement the hotel got soothed the proprietor,

for we made it all right with him, and the cook was taken back.

Apropos of Birmingham, one season when I was with Hengler's Circus at Curzon Hall, I met a fellow who made out that he was a poor professional comrade. He told me he had got something for me in the shape of a wonderful singing canary, and I said, "Let's have a look at it." We went into the "Boat" inn and he took me into the back room and brought out of his pocket a stick about two feet long with a little perch attached. From his other pocket he produced a small cage with a canary. Then he balanced the stick on his nose, let the bird loose, and it flew on the top of the stick and began to sing.

This struck me as a novelty, and I said, "Let me try it." I did, and the dear little thing went through the business all right.

I bought the bird right away for two pounds.

It so happened that we had a matinee in the afternoon and I told Mr. Powell, the manager, that I had a great novelty for the children, but I wouldn't let him know what it was, intending to keep it a great secret till I appeared in the arena.

I started by telling the children that I had something wonderful for them. I balanced the stick on my nose, opened the cage, the little bird flew out, but instead of alighting on the stick, it rose straight away to the top of the building. Of course everybody said they didn't think much of the novelty and the only thing that came of it was that I made myself a great laughing stock.

I hunted for the man who sold the bird and sold me in addition day after day, but all I found out

was that he was a swindler. He had put me off with a common hen canary, which he had substituted for the trained bird.

It was only fair, I suppose, that having played off my "whimsicalities" on other people, I should have a share in return. The canary trick was one of these acts of retaliation, and a practical joke I suffered at the hands of a professional ventriloquist who was called "Valentine Vox" was another. Val was a great friend of mine and we were both very fond of fishing. When we were performing at the Liverpool Empire he came to my dressing room one day, saying:

"Whimmy, I'm going fishing to-morrow just over the bar. I've a beautiful yacht; will you come?"

I said I would and enquired where we were to meet.

"At Prince's landing stage," said he, adding, "We shall have plenty of refreshments on board."

We met the next morning with our sea fishing tackle. I looked about for the beautiful yacht, but could see nothing of the kind.

"Oh," said he, "that's all right. She's anchored outside. Jump aboard this boat and these chaps will take us to it."

The boat was a clumsy mud barge attached to a tug which dragged us some little distance down the Mersey. I saw a twinkle in his eye. We crawled along and I began to have my suspicions, which were soon verified, for the beautiful yacht of which he had spoken was nothing but a mud barge! The only excuse Val gave

me was that he thought it much safer than the yacht, and so it may have been, but the worst of it was that once on we couldn't get off, and we were on that barge in the broiling sun all day till five o'clock at night. We never had a bite—much less a fish, and there was nothing for it but to go to sleep, and sleep I did!

CHAPTER XII

More odds and ends. How I was rescued from "drowning" at Douglas. The mock medals. A night sensation at sea. I act as a race-course steward at the Manx "Derby." A good old "gag." I personate another actor at Warrington. Dan Leno's champion clog dancing. Eccentric lodging house keepers. Selling the "deadheads." Advertisements introduced into performing. A mean firm. Curried fowl and the disappointed supers. Advertising an electric bell. The audience "sold." I play at the Cirque Nouveau, Paris. My excess of zeal.

I RECALL an unrehearsed incident at Douglas, in the Isle of Man. Hengler's Circus was situated on the quay and while it was there the maiden voyage of the steamship *The Peveril* from Liverpool to Douglas took place. Thousands and thousands of people waited on the pier to see this new boat arrive and all were agog to give it a hearty reception. It would be about noon when Connor, the manager of the circus, said to me chaffingly,

"I'll bet you a bottle of champagne you don't fall in the water."

"Done," I said.

I went into my dressing room in the circus and prepared for the plunge.

Connor hired a boat for himself, his wife and children, and I was to have gone with them. I followed them down the steps and they all got in the boat. I was the last and I was just going to put my foot on the boat when I slipped and fell into the water. Amid loud yells of "A man overboard!" two fishermen put off and dragged me into their boat, I making myself as heavy as possible, as though I'd been half drowned. I was put into a carriage and driven to the circus, which was only about 100 yards away, and underwent the process of first aid, the best part of which was the liberal dose of brandy administered.

The "accident" caused intense excitement and no end of talk, and hundreds of people came to the circus to see if poor dear old Whimmy was all right. Everybody breathed much more easily when they saw a board with a bill on it announcing that I should appear "Every evening at half past seven." It was a huge advertisement for both me and the circus, and what was more, I won my bet!

The thing was too good to let drop without making the most of it and as it was about the time for my benefit to come off, we were looking about for something startling to draw the public.

"Why not make use of your 'narrow escape from drowning,'" said Mr. Connor. "What about giving a medal to each of the fishermen who pulled you out of the water and saved your life?"

"Splendid!" I replied.

Bills setting forth the heroism of the fishermen and a good deal of flummery besides were printed, and I needn't say the house was crowded. The medals (made in Birmingham) cost me about 1s. 3d. each, and the moment came for me to present them to the brave fishermen. The medals were beautifully wrapped up in tissue paper and the audience applauded, doubtless thinking they were solid gold. The fishermen looked at these two medals—awfully common things they were—contemptuously and threw them in the sawdust. Then turning to me one of them growled indignantly :

" What the thingummy do you mean by insulting us with things like this ? I wish to what's-his-name you'd drowned."

And they walked out disgusted, muttering all the uncomplimentary things about me they could think of.

Everyone knows that the Isle of Man is the place for sprees. I was an actor in one of them at the Douglas races. The Douglas " Derby," I may remark, is a lovely burlesque of the Epsom festival. The course consists of a run over about nine fields for a quarter of a mile, and the grand stand is made out of orange boxes. I was made one of the stewards and wore the biggest of rosettes, of which I was not half proud, or pretended to be.

For the first race five horses were entered. I only saw one come in—I think the other four must have fallen over the cliff, as we never found them from that day to this. No race !

Just before the second race started one of the

horses bolted, knocked a poor old gentleman down, smashed his teeth, and he had to be taken to the hospital.

There were eight or nine horses in this race and when the first horse passed the post my impression was that it had won, and I gave my decision accordingly. It was pointed out that I was quite wrong, a fearful row sprang up, and the stewards were threatened with instant death if they didn't give the race to the third horse that came in. I said, of course, that it was wrong, but a horrible fate was held out to me and I threw up the sponge.

The third race was the big event—the Manx "Derby." A man whom I didn't know came up to me and whispered:

"The man who has been taking the money at the gate has disappeared with the cash. The best advice I can give you is to take that rosette off, and get away to Douglas as soon as possible, or they'll have your life."

It turned out that the story of the theft was true and the thief made good his escape to Liverpool. I lost no time in getting back to Douglas and suffered no harm. It was otherwise with a man named Williams, who had something to do with the committee. An angry crowd broke every window in his shop.

After this experience, no more steward business for me!

The great spectacle at the circus just then was a series representing incidents in the Zulu War, and there came a time when the show wanted

livening up a bit. Now a little way outside Douglas beach is what they call a "tower of refuge," and when the tide is out you can walk to it.

Mr. Albert Hengler and I put our heads together for some new "business" and we decided that we would have some fun on the "tower of refuge." To make our scheme successful we had to wait till it was a bit misty, and on a suitable night when the tide was up about five minutes past eleven, as the hotels were letting out the people, there was a fierce glare in the sky over the "tower of refuge" and everybody rushed out into the streets and on the sea shore in great alarm. Our plan for amusing the Manx visitors had started.

We had collected some forty supers and planted them on the "tower of refuge." We had ready a large fishing smack on the opposite side and this we boarded and were taken out to sea. The supers, supposed to be Zulus, had been provided with guns, which at a given signal they fired, at the same time making a fearful noise with their war cries. Rockets, squibs and red fire added to the picture.

Never was there such a hullabaloo in the Isle of Man, what with the panic and the preliminary drinks. The trippers thought the end of the world had come. The police were at their wits' end to know what to make of it. They suspected foul play, and running for boats they set out for the tower to capture the offenders. We had reckoned for something like this and hence our selection of a misty night. Of course we were invisible, for by the time the constables were

at the tower we were in the sailing boat and were right out to sea. They could not find out the offenders, and it was some hours before the truth oozed out—all to the good of the show.

The stage methods of getting in a wheeze to make the audience laugh are infinite. I remember one in connection with an engagement I was fulfilling in a big English provincial city. I was clowning in the centre of the ring, and after the lady rider had completed one of her paper hoop breaking circuits, I, by previous arrangement, entered into a fierce altercation with a groom for not holding his hoop properly. When the altercation was in full blast, he gave me—or pretended to give me—a heavy blow, and I fell on the sawdust in an apparent fit of hysterics.

"Brandy!" cried the ringmaster, as he rushed to my assistance. "Brandy! The poor fellow is in a fit."

A groom hurried from the ring entrance with a bottle—which, by the way didn't contain the real stuff—and I seized the bottle and began to drink feverishly. Then I yelled for "More brandy! More brandy!"

"Very sorry, Walker," said the ringmaster, soothingly, "but there's no more brandy left."

"No more brandy?" I cried. "No more brandy? Then if there's no more brandy there are no more fits!"

Of course, the gag is an old one, and has been done many times; but that ringmaster, with quiet sarcasm always afterwards addressed me as "Mr. Fitz-Walker!"

I was once on a visit to my son, who was appearing at Ohmy's Circus, then performing at the Court Theatre at Warrington, and I was strolling up the town when I met Harry Leopold, who was my fellow clown in the Drury Lane pantomime, "Beauty and the Beast," in 1890. Said he: "Whimmy, you're the very man I'm looking for." "Oh, what's up now?" He told me that his brother John had gone to Leeds on some very important legal business, that John could not appear at the "Court" that night, and that the manager of the theatre (a Mr. Potter) had intimated that if he did not appear the engagement would be cancelled. Would I take his place and save the situation? As I was very much like John—in fact, we were often taken for twins—the thing might be done, but there was one objection. I knew nothing about the play. "What's that to do with it? All we have to do with it is to have a rehearsal," said Harry. This got over the difficulty. I consented. I went through the business just to see what it was all about, and at 5 o'clock, Mr. Potter was informed that John had arrived. The theatre opened, the show commenced, and I got on all right in the first act, what with falling about, going up and down water spouts (the pipes, not the water), etc., to the delight of the audience. The second act was a schoolroom scene and in one part I had to hit the schoolmaster on the head with a tray. I did it so effectually that I laid him out; the schoolmaster acted no more that night, but the audience were greatly pleased; they thought it was all in the show.

I played the part all through the week, and then came Saturday night—settling up night. John had arrived by this time, and went into Mr. Potter's room to draw his salary. When the money had been handed over, Mr. Potter said solemnly, "John, if you had not appeared on Monday night I should certainly have had to close the theatre, as I never like to disappoint my audience. Now here are two returning dates for you." John thanked him and suggested a glass of wine. They adjourned to the hotel next to the theatre, with myself and nearly all the company. When there, John introduced me to Mr. Potter and told him how he had been had. Oh, the language that followed! Mr. Potter raged and stormed in such a fashion that the proprietor sent for a policeman, who gently but firmly led him out. Mr. Potter never forgave either of us.

The mention of Ohmy's Circus brings to my mind that it was when this circus was at Accrington my dear old friend Dan Leno had the start in life which first brought him into fame, though no one at the time could have foreseen what a wonderful dramatic career he was destined to have. Everyone knows that he began as an astonishingly clever clog dancer. He defeated competitor after competitor, but in a contest for a champion belt, the referee gave it against him—a notoriously unfair decision. Dan said nothing, but some little time later he issued a challenge of £400 to the alleged champion, which challenge had never been accepted. The champion made no reply, but contented himself with buying the belt from the donor for £10 and conveniently losing it. Dan took no more notice

of the champion and at a contest which was arranged between him and another expert he so conclusively proved his superiority that no one after that ventured to question his right to be the best clog dancer in England.

The ways and manners of many of the ladies who cater for theatrical and other professional lodgers are sometimes not such as to awaken much affection for them. I am led to the belief that they are a race apart, and that they look upon the professional, whether he be from the theatre, the music-hall or the circus, as a kind of lemon to be squeezed dry.

During a visit to the north, two of us were in lodgings, on the customary understanding that we provided our own food. We suspected that the landlady had taken a particular fancy to our potatoes, which when served were usually very deficient in number, as cooked, as compared with the number when raw. Consequently, one morning before we went out, we decided to count the potatoes, and afterwards compare the numbers with those served, when we returned and they were placed on the dinner table. Accordingly we took a record of the number of "murphys," went to rehearsal, and then returned to dinner. The potatoes were duly served up—but they had been mashed! The landlady knew something!

Here is an illustration of the strange notions which some Scottish landladies have of English tastes and customs. When fulfilling an engagement in a well-known Scottish city I went out for a stroll one afternoon and purchased some watercress, which I thought would form a fitting

accompaniment to the cold ham which I was to have for tea. I sent the watercress by messenger to my lodgings, which were not far distant, and when I returned I was amused and astonished to find the landlady had decorated every small vase in the room and the china ornaments on the mantelpiece with the watercress. She evidently imagined it was a kind of fern!

I believe Charles Dickens once said or wrote that the ruling passion in the human breast was the passion of asking for orders for the play. Anyhow, when people whom I have only met in the most casual manner unblushingly ask me to give them passes for any show I may be connected with, I often wonder how they imagine the manager pays his way. I should like to know what they would think of a performer who went into a butcher's shop and asked the butcher for a joint of beef, or a motor car dealer for a Rolls-Royce? It is a curious thing, but I have noticed that the deadheads or "non-payers" are always the hardest to please, and the very first to run the show down. This leads me to something which occurred in a town up north, where I had a two hours' wait. I was going into an hotel and in the passage accidentally knocked down a bill that evidently had just been stuck up by the billing man from the local theatre. I took it with me into the smoke room and read it by a better light, and found it was a bill of a Shakespearean company visiting the town on the following week, and I hung it up on the wall.

While I was so doing the landlord came in and said he supposed I was the advance agent for the

company. I felt so flattered that I let him think so, and extolled the players and the dresses in my most exuberant and convincing style. His wife came in and I went all over it again, warming to the task. Never had anything like it visited the town ; the artistes were the pick of the London theatres, playing under assumed names, so as to account for them not having been heard of before. The scenery had been designed by Royal Academicians and painted by the leading scenic artists, Telbin, Hawes Craven, Bruce Smith, etc., while the ladies' dresses came straight from the Rue de la Paix. I was in my glory; I commenced to believe it myself. Thousands had been spent on the production, and so on and so on. The other customers commenced to sit up and take notice, and the climax I'd been working up to arrived. Could I give the landlord and his wife and daughter a pass for early closing night? That did it. I wrote them a pass "Admit three, Box B, Thursday night," and signed myself "Hookey Walker." Then the customers jumped at the chance; they all had a go at me; I gave them passes signed with different names. I felt I'd done my best, so I caught my train to Leeds, where I was playing the following week. I have often wondered what happened to those people when they turned up at the theatre on early closing night, the best night of the week, with the bogus passes!

Not infrequently approaches are made to the simple-minded "pro" through the ready method of "standing treat," and really I've had foolish people spend more money in this way than the

seat would cost. Once, however, the boot was on the other leg. I was having a glass at my own expense when an insinuating person entered into conversation which I made sure was going to lead up to the usual request, especially as from one or two words he let fall—he evidently took me for an agent in advance. He was so excessively complimentary and flattering that I could hardly do less than ask him to join me in a drink, and he accepted my invitation at once. After he'd drained his glass he enquired "Are you having another?" I was; whereupon he remarked calmly: "All right then, I'll wait outside for you." His impudence so took me aback that I didn't know whether to be angry or amused.

Some of the oddest things happen in connection with the advertisements which enterprising firms arrange to have introduced into the pantomime. It generally falls to the lot of the unhappy clown to have to engineer the introduction. Sometimes they get directly or indirectly a small remuneration. Sometimes they don't. Once when I was with Hengler's in the provinces, Mr. Powell, the circus manager, told me that a Liverpool firm wanted their "beautiful two-shilling tea" brought in somehow, and that they would make it worth my while if I could do it. I did do it—for all it was worth and perhaps more. But the firm were silent over my recompense, and chancing to be near Liverpool, I called at the shop, which was a kind of universal store, and saw the manager on the matter.

In those days I prided myself on my swagger tailoring, and especially on my tall silk hat, which

was always of the best and glossiest, and the manager, after listening to my representations, offered me and the member of the company who was with me two of the cheapest and commonest bowler hats they had in stock. We walked out of the shop, leaving the hats behind us. That night and for several other nights I had my revenge. I introduced my packet of the "beautiful two-shilling tea," and after a suitable wheeze opened the packet and poured out the contents—sawdust! I don't think the firm was pleased.

Another experience was of a different kind. The article to be advertised was somebody's tinned curried chicken and rabbit, and to stimulate my imagination, I suppose, they sent me samples, which I needn't say I tasted, and found very good. Accompanying my samples was a quantity of other tins exactly similar and having the letter "D" marked on the outside. The Israelites got tired of quails, and I began to tire of curried chicken and rabbit, so I turned the lot over to the property master, who picked out one and was perfectly satisfied. But, like me, he did not care for curry every day, so he distributed the rest among the stage hands, who were only too pleased at the prospect of a dainty supper for once. But delight turned to rage when they opened their tins. They were all dummies and this was what the letter "D" stood for! They went for the property master, who they thought had sold them. But the poor man was blameless. He had by the merest chance picked out a genuine tin.

A droll business was that of the much advertised

Harness electric belt. It was believed to be a fraud, and time showed that this belief was justified. As people were talking about the exposure it seemed to be a good subject for burlesque, and I worked out something. I solemnly told the audience that my donkey's surcingle (the girth that went round his body) was electrified, and attaching a rope to it with a bell at the surcingle end I pattered a lot about electricity being life, and invited anyone who wanted a shock to step upon the stage.

First one and then another obliged me, and soon there was quite a queue all holding the rope. I asked them to pull. The bell rang, but nothing else happened. They looked very blank and I pretended to be much surprised. "What—no shock?" said I. They shook their heads. "Strange!" I murmured. "Try again." They did try, but no shock followed. I scratched my chin as if much puzzled. "Try once more. There ought to be a shock, you know." Evidently the queue thought so too, and they made another effort. "Oh well," I exclaimed despairingly, "if that's the case it's no use going on any longer. I'm much obliged to you gentlemen for your kind assistance, but you see how it is." They dropped the rope, looking much disappointed, and were about to file down to their seats when a confederate among the little crowd indignantly demanded to know what I had been up to? "Oh," said I carelessly, "I only wanted to know how many fools I could draw to the donkey's Harness belt." The fun was seized upon instantly and the audience shook with laughter. I don't know

whether those who had been taken in liked the joke or not. But this was of no consequence.

When I was engaged at the Cirque Nouveau in the Rue Honoré, Paris, I was the victim of excess of zeal. In Spain I found I was able to overcome the difficulties of the language by making myself master of four or five words. I could say "good-day, "good-night," "sing" (this was to my donkey), "wine" (I needn't mention how useful this word was); this was all, but it sufficed. The Spaniards said I spoke Spanish like a native —but this might have been out of politeness. Recollecting my linguistical success in Madrid, I thought I would try to do the same thing in Paris. I employed a French schoolmaster to teach me. I hadn't too much time in which to acquire proficiency and I set to work to cram myself, especially with the French equivalents of the various wheezes which went down well in England. It was all a job and meant two or three sleepless nights. However, at the end I was under the impression I spoke French like a Parisian, and I proudly displayed my accomplishments in the ring.

Somehow the audience did not seem to laugh so heartily as I expected, and at the end of my show the manager sent for me. "What the deuce (or a word to that effect) did you mean by talking French?" he demanded angrily. I explained my reasons and represented how hard I had studied. "Hang it," was his reply, "didn't I engage you as an *English* clown?" The people who came to see you were nearly all English and

American, and you do nothing but talk French. They don't understand a word you're saying." I admitted that this might be so and for the future I went back to my Cockney tongue, doubtless to everybody's relief. But I was rather upset at having wasted my energies.

CHAPTER XIII

American notes. A bogus boxing match. Dispersed by hose-pipe. Jem Mace and Joe Goss. I second Mace and get the worst of it. Queer American law. Washed away on Coney Island. An insulted Irishman. How I started " Sequah " in business. Daring robbery of my presentation watch and chain. Curious coincidences. Terrible death of a Barnum acrobat. I go to America with Charlie Chaplin. An unlucky tour. The company collapse in Seattle. The discomforts of a Seattle hospital. I return to England. An unexpected shower bath. Chased by a hippopotamus.

Not a few odd things happened to me in America. I have already mentioned some. One of the tours in the States opened at Maddison Square Gardens for six weeks and we gave up one night for a boxing match between John L. Sullivan and Tug Wilson. Of course we had a holiday that night and we all went to see this fight. It was a bit of a farce. Tug Wilson only had to go through four rounds, and every time that Sullivan was going to hit him with the glove he fell down.

After the four rounds there was a fearful hubbub, the audience seeing that it was a planned thing. Fights and scrambles were going on all over the place and I was helpless against the crowd and had to go with it. I was lifted off my legs and

somehow I was forced into the boxers' dressing room with Tug Wilson's manager. He had with him a little black bag with the dollars in it and we at once barricaded the door the best way we could. Outside the mob were shouting "Open the door! We want our money back!"

The manager could not see his way to do this and we remained prisoners until somebody outside suggested the hose-pipe! A dozen willing hands went to work. They made a big hole in the wall in less than no time, put the hose-pipe on us, and the next minute we were swamped. The water was nearly up to our waists till the police came and gave us our liberty. I believe Tug Wilson took 5,000 dollars back to Birmingham.

Another episode connected with boxing matches happened to me also in New York. Howes and Cushing's Circus had a piece of ground in 14th Street, right opposite Tony Pastor's, and here they engaged Jem Mace and Joe Goss to give sparring exhibitions afternoon and evening. I, being the English clown, had to second Jem Mace—my pal the other clown, an American, Teddy Almonte, seconded Joe Goss. The champions set to and Jem Mace showed his usual cleverness with his head in avoiding his antagonist's blows. Once he made a rapid duck and I caught the glove in my face. It was a lovely little tap—it didn't hurt me, but the blood began to run down my nose and I fell on my back about three or four feet away. Of course it was a big success with the audience, but not with me, so I hopped it out of the ring and went into my dressing room. Presently the pugilistic gentlemen came in. I

had my handkerchief to my nose and said to Jem Mace:

"Take this iron steak and hit him on the head with it."

He said, "What for?"

I said, "See what he's done: surely you'll take my part."

And all that I got from Jem Mace was:

"Keep your eyes open in future."

That finished my career as a second.

The law as it is in America struck me as peculiar. I remember that on one occasion a nail in one of the seats of the circus got attached to a portion of one of our patron's clothing. He claimed a new pair. I was sent with the man to a lawyer to estimate the damage—it struck me at the time a tailor would have been a better man for the job. However, we reached the office and the lawyer induced the man to take three dollars and leave the old pair of trousers. First he signed a document to that effect and after it was duly signed the man held his hand out for payment. But the lawyer said he must first hand over the torn pair. By the time the man had gone home to change his garments the circus had moved to the next town, together with the man's three dollars.

I was once at Coney Island—the Brighton of America—with the Mexican Circus there, run by the Brothers Carlo. We pitched on the sands and had a good deal of difficulty in erecting the booths as the sand there is so soft. We slept at the wooden shanty, dignified by the name of hotel, and one morning we awoke to find the circus and paraphernalia gone! In the middle of the night

the tide had risen higher than usual and took the lot away. That was the end of the circus at Coney Island.

I have already mentioned the Leopolds. They were of Irish extraction and their real name was Kelly. John, who was my fellow clown at Drury Lane, and who was so like me that I was once able to play for him and get him out of a scrape, was touring with his brother Willie at Warrington, in the United States; and when staying in New York paid a visit to the poorer quarters of the city, where the people were mostly negroes. They were very much amused at the antics of some little black children who were playing about in the street, and Willie Leopold suggested to John that it would be a great novelty to take one of the little niggers back to England and put it into a comic act, as no one had hitherto thought of doing this, although it was successfully done by several people afterwards. John agreed, and they were just wondering how they should approach the parents and what it would cost to take them over, when a black woman opened a window and putting her head out cried, "Come inside, you naughty piccaninnies, playin' out there in the gutter. Folks'll fink yo's Irish!" I can still see the look of indignation which went over John's great fat good-tempered face when he told me of the insult to his country.

My acquaintance with Jem Mace and Joe Goss led to many interesting talks over the cheerful glass about the bygone glories of the prize ring both in England and in America. The New York exponents of the "noble art" who sometimes

joined us had much to say about prize fighting in the States, especially in the western towns. Apparently there was no rule to guide the combatants. Fights were go-as-you-please affairs. A match generally started with the question from one or the other fighter something like this: "Will you fight fair or take it rough and tumble?" and if the gentleman was of the bragging swashbuckler order (which as a rule he was) he might add: "I can whip you each way, by thunder!"

What was meant by fighting "fair" my informant could not say exactly, but about the "rough and tumble" method there was no mystery. Any kind of injury either champion could inflict, no matter how, was considered legitimate. They bit and kicked; they hit below the belt or other parts of the body excluded by the Queensberry rules, and the time limit between the rounds was extremely elastic.

Years after, when Sayers, Mace, Goss and other British "pugs" were in their prime, John Morissey came to the front in America. John Morissey once had a fight with an Englishman, Thompson by name. Thompson knocked his man down eleven times and was himself very little hurt. In spite of this Morissey was declared the winner because of a foul blow struck by Thompson. Considering American methods, this scrupulousness strikes one as somewhat extraordinary, but there was an adequate explanation. Had Thompson beaten Morissey he would have been shot by Morissey's friends!

I recollect Joe Goss in another connection. Mr. Bailey, who ran the Barnum show after Mr. Barnum's death, presented me with a gold watch

and chain which had once belonged to the famous fighter. The chain was a very massive one and said to be the handsomest ever manufactured. Years after, when I was playing in a pantomime at Drury Lane, I was robbed of both in a very ingenious and systematic way. The rehearsal one day had been particularly long and fatiguing and when I came out of the theatre I was dead beat. I went to my nephew's lodgings, not far from Drury Lane, for a rest and a sleep, as I had another rehearsal at eight o'clock that night. I told my nephew to wake me at seven o'clock, but to be doubly sure I set the alarm clock at that hour. Then taking off my watch and chain and rings, I placed them near the pillow and threw myself on the bed.

I slept so soundly that I never heard the alarm and my nephew did not come. It was half past seven when I awoke, and quite dark. I turned up the light and looked for my watch and chain. Both were gone and my rings and everything. Thieves had found their way to the room. It turned out that my nephew had gone out to give his little dog a run and had been waylaid by the gang, enticed to drink, and detained while their confederates robbed me. I had been watched for days most probably, and my habits noted. When I got to the theatre and told my boss, I wasn't believed. It was all " cod " and so on. Of course I went to the police. Three detectives were put on the job, but their efforts came to nothing. I never saw my presentation watch and chain any more.

It may be mentioned as a singular coincidence that Edward Giovanelli, a noted clown in the

'fifties, lost a watch and a medallion in much the same fashion—that is to say he was watched previous to the robbery. His watch was also a presentation one and was given to him by his nephews the Leopolds. A dog also figured in the robbery, which took place in the street.

Just one more watch coincidence, which came about through a tour in America. While at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia I ran across a young man named Arthur Pitt, whose father, an innkeeper at Barnsley, I knew very well. Arthur was a professional runner and when I met him he was terribly hard up, and I bought his watch, the gift of his father, for fifty dollars. Some years later, when I was with Hengler's Circus at Scarborough, and chanced to go into the "Silver Grid" Hotel, who should be there but Sam Pitt, Arthur's father, and while having a drink I chanced to take out my watch, and he no sooner caught sight of it than he exclaimed "Why, that's my son's watch." I told him how I became possessed of it and he bought it on the spot and insisted upon giving me £20.

Those attached to travelling circuses are bound to have ups and downs, and I have had a few, but nothing so terrible as on a certain night when Barnum's menagerie train stopped at a western station and was shunted into a siding for the night. This was not an uncommon experience, and as we were provided with sleeping accommodation we were comfortable enough as a rule. On this occasion the siding was very close to the main track—in fact only just wide enough to allow a train to pass without touching our cars. One of our party, a

young acrobat, had gone to get some beer, and when coming back was caught in this narrow space by a goods train, which he either did not see or was not quick enough to avoid. In an instant he was spun round like a top and was literally cut to pieces. It was an awful sight.

It was on my ninth visit to America that I went out with Charlie Chaplin, about whom I shall have something to say later on. It came about in this way. I was on my beam ends—nothing to do—just lost my savings in a bad speculation, and absolutely broke to the world. I was in London looking for work and I met a friend who invited me to have some refreshment with him, so we went into an hotel, where we found Charlie Chaplin, Arthur Reeves, Charlie Baldwin (who wrote my sketch, " Captain Hamilton, V.C.") and two or three others. One of the party hailed me. " Whimmy," said he, " we were just talking about you. How would you like to go to America ? We sail to-morrow morning." " What's the business ? " I asked. " Fred Karno's sending the ' Wow Wows ' (one of Karno's burlesque companies) with Charlie Chaplin. Will you come with us and play a part ?" " What about the salary ? " was my natural query. We discussed this important matter and eventually settled terms, but it was absolutely the lowest salary I ever had for forty years. Still, I was glad to take it, and went into the billiard room and signed the contract. We left Waterloo station early next morning and were off to America. We arrived at New York to find that New York had greatly altered. In fact it was a new America. I had been there eight previous times, but it was a

new world to me, everybody and everything had altered so much.

We found we were up against great opposition. The caterers for amusement had increased and multiplied since my previous visit. The taste had changed and novelties had been introduced to suit the jaded palates of the excitement-seeking Americans. We were on the Sullivan circuit and at each town we had opposition at the other theatres —Sarah Bernhardt at one theatre and Mrs. Langtry at the other—until we got right up to San Francisco. We then went on to Bute, 2,000 feet above the sea, and when we arrived there we found out that the theatre at which we had arranged to appear had been burnt down. Ill luck seemed bent upon pursuing us. However, our manager engaged a large hall and we opened. Most of the population were miners, diggers, etc., and a very rough lot too. It was the roughest place I have ever been into. The climate, the hard travelling and the living didn't suit any of us, and the company began to feel very bad. The ladies lost their voices—the gentlemen could hardly work, and some of them, including myself, began bleeding at the nose. This rather frightened some of us, and to make matters worse we could not get any quinine at the drug stores. Possibly we had influenza very badly.

We were glad enough to be free from the town and we travelled on to Seattle, the starting point for the Klondyke region. It was a very long journey and raining hard all the while. I became so bad that I thought my time had come. I went to my hotel, but could not sleep or rest a bit. I got up early the next morning and saw Mr. Alf Reeves,

Whimsical Walker as "The Single Gentleman" in Hepworth's Film, "The Old Curiosity Shop"

Whimsical Walker and the Drury Lane Harlequinade entertaining the Lord and Lady Mayoress and children at the Mansion House, London, in aid of the Blind Children of London

he being the manager of the show, told him my condition, and he sent me to Dr. Bourne, a very clever theatrical doctor. I saw the doctor the next morning and the first words he said were, "You have got erysipelas in the face. I must send you to the fever hospital immediately. It is contagious." He 'phoned, the ambulance was at the door in less than ten minutes, and I was on my way to the hospital, some three miles out of Seattle and an awful wooden shanty.

It was Christmas time and my Christmas dinner consisted of a glass of milk. I was put to bed and the first thing the doctor said to me was, "I must cut your hair." Well, he started on the job, lost his nerve, didn't cut it, but pulled it out. I said, "That will do," and I wouldn't let him do any more. The next step was to tar my face and put wool on it. I guess I looked an awful sight.

I stopped in the hospital for about a week and when the doctor came in from Seattle I told him that if I remained another day I should die. Perhaps he saw that, for the ambulance was brought and I was taken to the city hospital in Seattle, and I was there for nearly three months. They absolutely starved me, a new and unpleasant experience for an old hard-up English actor used to good living. The upshot of the business was that my manager said the best thing I could do was to get home.

So I went on to San Francisco, from there to Santiago, and thence to Salt Lake City, one of the prettiest and cleanest cities in America, the streets built so that the water flows all day and night down the gutters. From there to New York,

caught the *Oceanic*, arrived safe and sound at Liverpool, and came on to London to my wife. She was greatly surprised to see me as she had never heard from me for months; they had never sent a word from the hospital! She was beginning to think I was dead.

I don't know why my starting for America and my return to my native shore should so often be celebrated by larky rejoicings. I can understand my friends being glad to see me safe and sound after my travels, but I do not quite fathom their delight at my going away. However, there it is. I was once coming from New York and arrived in Liverpool the night before the Grand National, intending to put up at the "Bee" Hotel, the proprietor of which was a great friend of mine for many years—Tom Bush. We reached the hotel and the man at the door said, "Very sorry, sir, we are full up." Mr. Bush was fetched and he was awfully pleased to see me, but he could not put me up—in fact he had to go out of his own hotel to sleep, the place was so full of bookmakers and jockeys. But he saw that I was determined to stop, so he placed a board on the top of the bath and with a mattress and a blanket I decided I should be all right. After supper I was introduced to the racing fraternity. I found I was a sort of god with them and I did my best to entertain them with funny tales. About 4 a.m. I left them and reached my bath bedroom. I woke up about 7 o'clock dying for a soda and milk. I saw something dangling and thinking it was the bell I pulled it, but instead of the bell it was the shower. The quickest thing I ever did in my life was to get out

of that bed. And everyone swore that I did it purposely!

In the March following I returned to America. I went down to Prince's Pier and boarded the boat with everyone wishing me *bon voyage*. It then occurred to me I'd do something funny to mark the occasion, so I went down to my stateroom, opened the porthole, and squeezed my head through it, making grimaces at my friends as the steamer was just going out of the Mersey. To my horror I could not get my head back! I don't know exactly what I thought, but among other things was that I might have to die with my head through the porthole! Perhaps the boat would have to be cut in half to get my head out. I shouted, the bedroom steward arrived, and with a spoon he got my ears down, and somehow I squeezed myself back to the world.

I had not been twenty-four hours in New York before my nerves were again shaken. We opened at Madison Square Gardens and I had brought over some beautiful clown's dresses made of satin, for the three ring show. It was just dusk and I was taking all my lovely dresses in a big white bundle across the first ring and decided that by climbing over the ring fence I should save something like a quarter of a mile. I was just over the ring fence and had made about three strides when I heard something grunt at the back of me. I turned round. I could see a huge animal after me—it was the hippopotamus! I took to my heels and ran as hard as I could, thinking my next moment would be my last, caught my foot against the other side of the ring fence and went sprawling with all my

beautiful dresses scattered in every direction. I shouted out and George Hawkinstall, the master of the animals, came to my assistance, screaming with laughter. He told me that he had never seen anything so comical, me sprawling on the ground and the huge beast with his cavern of a mouth wide open in wonderment. "He wouldn't hurt you," was George's consoling remark. "He only thought that white bundle of yours was bread. He's awfully fond of bread."

CHAPTER XIV

My second visit to Australia. I train a performing horse on board. Am engaged by Harry Rickards for a twenty-seven weeks' tour. I play for five nights only. Summoned to London by Mr. Arthur Collins owing to the death of Herbert Campbell. Mr. Rickards' luxurious home. I bathe with sharks. I escort two wallabies to England. A strange meeting at Colombo. I arrive in London. Death of Dan Leno. Dan's merry pranks. His unlucky garden party.

I HAVE already alluded to my first visit to Australia. This was in the early 'eighties. Some twenty years had passed when I went for the second time to the Antipodes. I was engaged by the late Harry Rickards, proprietor of several theatres and music halls in Australia, to undertake a tour which was to last twenty-seven weeks.

I looked forward to seeing once more the towns with which I had already become acquainted, and I set out from Tilbury Docks in one of the steamers of the Blue Anchor Line called *Wilcania*.

The voyage was somewhat tedious. The boat could hardly get up speed enough to race a tug, and on reaching Sydney she came to an untimely end running ashore on the rocks in the harbour.

At least that was the last I saw of her. I am glad to say that before this happened I was safely landed.

Slow as the travelling was, I found something to employ my time and that something was fortunately quite in my line. On board was a beautiful horse called "Pistol." He was being sent to Adelaide for stud purposes, his ultimate destination being Perth. A more symmetrical and intelligent animal I have never set eyes on. We were immense friends at once and I set to work to train him to perform a number of tricks.

As the weather was fairly fine and the passage tolerably smooth, I was able to give him two or three lessons every day. Under my tuition he soon became proficient and his performances gave great delight to the passengers.

Among other things I taught him to take my hat from my head, to say "yes" and "no"—in signs of course—etc. By the time we reached Cape Town, "Pistol" was able to ring a bell for his breakfast, to laugh by showing his teeth, and to lie down and sit up at the word of command. We gradually became much attached to each other, and when we arrived at Adelaide and we had to part company, I believe he was as sorry as I was. I went with him to the stables on shore, where we bade each other farewell, and he looked quite sorrowfully at me.

The steamer had two other horses on board—big clumsily-built Clydesdales. I did not attempt to do anything with them. They were not of the kind of which trick horses are made and they were very vicious into the bargain. They were

kept in separate boxes and did not, I fancy, take very kindly to sea life.

I returned to the ship and went on to Melbourne. We stopped there one day and I took the opportunity of going to the post office to see if any letters had arrived for me overland via Marseilles. To my great surprise I found a cablegram awaiting me from Drury Lane Theatre. "Return. Arthur Collins," it said. It took me quite aback and I did not know in the least what to think of it. Here was I in Australia, thousands of miles from home, bound by a contract to stay a certain time and make a little money, and Arthur Collins' message fairly bewildered me. All the same it had to be replied to in some shape or form. I returned to the ship and went on to Sydney, but I could get no sleep as I was worrying about the cablegram. Nightmares pursued me that perhaps I had committed some awful crime—or the police were after me!

I reached Sydney one evening in September and the lovely panorama of the harbour and its surroundings presented a sight I haven't forgotten to this day. The ship anchored a mile and a half from the city and when I landed who should be waiting for me but Harry Rickards with a brougham and a pair of beautiful horses. He drove me to my hotel and as I went along I saw poster after poster with "Whimsical Walker" in the biggest type procurable. My word, he *had* advertised me! In fact too much, I began to think, with the cablegram from Drury Lane at the back of my mind.

I must say Harry treated me like a prince.

At night he took me to the National Sporting Club to a Press supper, which I should have enjoyed more if that confounded cablegram had not been worrying me all the time. Just before we left the club I plucked up courage and showed Mr. Rickards the message. He read it and said, "Well, what are you going to do?"

I told him that to cable to me from England meant something very important and that I couldn't afford to neglect it, and that I had made up my mind to sail away with the next boat. Of course he was very much annoyed and he threatened to bring an action against me if I did so. I said, "Bring the action against the Drury Lane Company." "I haven't engaged the Drury Lane Company, I've engaged you," he retorted. He was, of course, perfectly right, and after we'd finished up at the club he said, "Come to my office in the morning at eleven o'clock and we'll talk it over."

Next morning I kept the appointment. Mr. Rickards was smiling, and said he: "Well, Whimmy, have you made up your mind?"

"Yes," said I, "I'm returning home on Saturday week."

His reply was that it was very unbusinesslike and meant a loss, seeing what it had cost him to advertise me. Presently he went on to say: "Anyway you're here, and you don't sail till Saturday week, will you show to my patrons for five nights and two matinees? If you'll do that you can catch the boat on the Saturday week."

I thought it very good of him, so I consented, and we shook hands on the bargain and walked

back to the National Sporting Club. There a newspaper was put into my hand and I saw in it to my great sorrow of the death of poor Herbert Campbell, my associate in many a Drury Lane pantomime. Then I knew the meaning of Mr. Arthur Collins' cablegram.

Well, I had a jolly time of it—Mr. Rickards would have me stay at his beautifully fitted house as long as I was in Melbourne. Among other luxuries he had a bathroom built inside the harbour with sea water flowing through the bath all the time. In front of this bath was a steel lattice and occasionally one could enjoy the spectacle of hungry sharks watching and waiting for the meal they were destined never to enjoy. The sight gave me an uncommon zest for my swim, knowing they could not get at me.

For five nights and two matinees I played, together with Louise Carbasse, a talented child actress, in a comedy sketch, "Captain Hamilton, V.C.," written by Charles Baldwin. The sketch had a touch of pathos in it and went down well with my Melbourne audience. I wound up with "The Mad Fisherman," a pantomime absurdity in which I appeared alone.

Spending only five days in Melbourne I hadn't much time to notice what changes had taken place since I had first visited the city. Of more importance to me was to ascertain if my "turn" had gone well with the audience and what the Press had to say about it. So far as the Melbourne public are concerned I had made a hit and I enquired of Mr. Rickards if the papers had commented at all. We were at the National

Sporting Club at the time and Mr. Rickards, taking up a periodical called *Truth* and pointing out a certain passage said: "Have you seen *that*?" This was what I read: "We hear that Whimsical Walker is sailing for England on Saturday. It is a good job. If he had stopped in this country we'd have shot him!" I put down the paper somewhat staggered. "What on earth for? What have I done?" I asked. "Don't be alarmed, my dear chap," said Rickards. "That's nothing to what the fellow says about *me*." Then he pointed to the lady at the buffet, remarking: "She horsewhipped him for his scurrilous writings about her. She's English and ever since his castigation he never loses a chance of saying something nasty about England and the English. No one takes any notice of him." That being the case I didn't think it worth while to take any notice either.

Rickards was one of the best of fellows. He had been a comic vocalist in England in the 'seventies. Many old music-halls patrons of those days may perhaps remember the song which made him popular. It ran, "His lordship winked at the counsel and the counsel winked at the judge." He made more money out of his singing than he did by a music-hall venture at Plymouth. This broke him; he became bankrupt and he left for Australia heavily in debt. However, after he had made a fortune in Melbourne and Sydney he paid every one in full. Like many in the theatrical profession he was a bit superstitious. His theatre in Sydney was burnt down and it so happened that on that particular night one of the musical selections

given was Tosti's song "Good-bye." After that he forbade this song being given at any of his theatres. He need not have been so weak-minded. Such a thing wasn't likely to occur again.

Just before I started, Mr. Bland Holt, proprietor of the Theatre Royal, Sydney, and a great friend of Mr. Arthur Collins, hearing I was going to Drury Lane, came to me and asked if I would do him a favour by taking a present to Mr. Collins in the shape of two little rock wallabies—a small species of kangaroo. I agreed and he brought them on board in a cage. They were amiable, playful little creatures and became the pets of all the passengers. I was very fortunate in eventually handing them over in good condition to Mr. Collins, as they are very delicate animals and rarely survive the voyage. Mr. Collins was delighted with them and I believe they were ultimately presented to the Zoo.

I took passage in the R.M.S. *Orior* and we left Sydney harbour on the 11th October, after quite a new experience, namely, travelling 8,000 miles or so to play for five nights only!

On the journey I had one or two experiences. Coming through the bight off Fremantle, where on my previous visit to Australia, we had, owing to the rough sea, to throw some of the animals overboard to save the ship, we found no improvement in the behaviour of the waves and as a consequence the steamer had to go direct to Colombo instead of putting in at Fremantle.

At Colombo—a lovely place—beautiful atmosphere and such pretty dear little children—a funny thing occurred. I was walking along the jetty

saying to myself, "Thank goodness, no one will recognise me here"—at Melbourne I was stopped every few yards wherever I went—when, as I was passing the Bristol Hotel, I heard someone shout, "Hello, Whimmy, what the deuce are you doing here?" Then came another personal enquiry as to whether I'd brought my red-hot poker with me, and a third warned me that there were no pantomimes in Colombo.

I had run across some members of Bannerman's Opera Company. They had been playing for three nights in Colombo and were going on to India. Such surprise meetings are of course common enough in England at railway junctions—Derby especially—on Sundays, the travelling day for touring companies, and very pleasant they are. Friends in the profession who've not met for years come across each other, renew their friendships over the cheerful glass—if the restrictions permit—and part not to meet again for years more—perhaps never. I was used to this sort of thing in the old country, but to have such a meeting in Colombo nearly took away my breath. All I can say is that we had a high old time.

Passing through the Suez canal it was the turn of the sailors. Jack ashore is always out for a lark. Our men started with the donkeys, which they rode in their own style and ended by having a row with some Arabs. The result of the shindy was the pitching of several of the natives into the water. After that leave was stopped and they had to console themselves with concerts on board, games, boxing matches, etc. It was all great fun.

At last I arrived in London and the first news I heard was that my dear old pal Dan Leno was dead. He not long survived his close comrade Herbert Campbell. It was a sad blow to think that these two splendid humorists, who had played into each other's hands at old Drury to the delight of thousands, would never be seen again. To me the loss could not be made good. I had acted with them in the Drury Lane pantomimes for so long that when I appeared on the boards I felt a blank which I can hardly describe.

Apart from stage associations I had many a merry moment with Dan. He was always bubbling over with humour. Once I remember, coming with him from rehearsal, strolling down the Strand to the "Marble Halls"—the favourite name of the restaurant adjoining the Adelphi Theatre. The Hotel Cecil was then being built and as we passed it Dan suggested we should stand treat to the bricklayers. Away we went across the road, and when Dan asked the fellows if they would like a drink their smiles reached from ear to ear.

"All right, boys," said he, "come along," and followed by a little crowd in their plaster and mud, he took them to the "Marble Halls." The porter in his gorgeous livery looked horrified. Dan protested. People stopped to see what was the matter.

"They won't allow the hard-working British man to have a drink," he exclaimed indignantly. A policeman interfered—and we all had to "pass along." I suspected Dan had some little game in his head, but did not know what it was. However, we went on to the "Queen's Head," the landlord

of which was a friend of us both. This hostelry was provided with numerous partitions, all of which were soon crowded.

"Give all these dear good hard-working men two pennyworth of port wine each," called out Dan. The men looked down their noses and growled out that they wanted beer. Dan pretended to show great surprise, but in the end paid for as much as they could drink. He had had his joke and was satisfied.

There never was a man fonder of children than Dan was. It is on record that the day before he took to his bed in his last illness he visited the Belgravia Hospital for Children at Kennington, went over the institution and left a liberal donation. One beautiful day in August I chanced to meet him. "You're just the boy I want, Whimmy. I'm giving a children's party to-morrow —about 300—and their fathers and mothers are coming to tea. Be at my place in the morning."

Dan lived at Clapham Park and I went down and helped him to put up coloured lamps for the illumination at night. There were also to be fireworks, over which he had spent some £40. These were stored in a little outhouse. But long before night came there was an impromptu display. While we were hanging the lamps we heard an explosion and saw all the fireworks going up in the air. One of his children had somehow managed to set fire to the lot. But no one was hurt. Dan wasn't a bit upset.

This was not the end of Dan's misfortunes. The children poured in and so did the parents; the band played on the lawn, some played cricket,

danced and so on, and then the time came to light the lamps. Alas! The sun and the hot air—it was a blazing day—had melted the little candles inside. No fireworks—no illumination. There still remained the magic lantern show which had been prepared. This surely should go without any mishap. Oh dear, no. A quarrel sprang up between some boys behind the screen as to who should manage the show. A fight followed and down came the sheet. There was no exhibition and it was difficult to say who was the more disappointed—Dan or the children.

This ought to have been sufficient for the day, but it wasn't. A final disaster affecting me personally was yet to come. It was 5 a.m. when I left, and as no conveyance was possible I started to walk to town, Dan going with me. It so happened that I was wearing a new pair of patent leather boots, and these having been in the sun all day soon became intolerable, so I took them off and we both sat down on a road-side seat. Presently a milk cart came along and this we stopped and arranged with the driver to give us a lift. I put the boots near the cans and was fairly comfortable. We reached Brixton police station and I looked for my boots. They had vanished—jogged off the cart without my seeing them go. I waited at a coffee stall until the trams began to run and finished the rest of the journey in my stockinged feet. And this was the end of Dan Leno's garden party!

Like the rest of us, Dan could never resist a chance of a practical joke. I had been promised an Irish terrier puppy by a breeder at Levenshulme,

near Manchester. I had been out all day and when I reached home I found Dan there and that the dog had arrived in a box. Dan was frightfully indignant and put the blame on me of treating it cruelly—not having even given it a drop of water. It was in vain for me to protest; he told me the R.S.P.C.A. ought to be informed. I was surprised he had not let the dog out, so I drew the nails from the box and put my hand inside to take out the puppy. To my consternation it was stone cold. "I'm afraid it's dead, Dan," I whispered. Then I pulled out the dead animal and found it was a pantomime dog which he had got from the theatre property room! My own dog he had dispatched to his own house. Poor Dan was full of pranks.

CHAPTER XV

Managers and actors I have known. P. T. Barnum. A wonderful organiser. How a big circus travels. Barnum's consideration for his company. His little speeches. General TomThumb. Signor Foli and Frank Celli. Sir Augustus Harris a born showman. The elder Harris and his glossy hat. The value of an advertisement. My "benefit" at Drury Lane and why it was a frost. I miss my chance in the Drury Lane Pantomime, 1890-91, "Beauty and the Beast." An unrehearsed incident. I play "Mercury" in "Venus." I am "Hamlet" at Richardson's show in the Olympic Carnival. A Scottish "Ghost." A new view of "Hamlet."

LOOKING back and reviving old memories is to most of us a task of mingled pleasure and pain. It is especially so to me, when I think of the many bright souls, now passed away, who in their career as "servants of the public" did so much to gladden the hearts of others. I have in other chapters, as opportunity served, alluded to members of the theatrical and circus profession more or less notable with whom I have been associated; and I now propose to add a few more personal recollections of some of these, together with what I recall of episodes connected with others. Unfortunately, I am compelled to rely solely upon my memory, as valuable material committed to paper was together with my dresses and other

property burnt in the fire at Drury Lane some few years ago.

As a good deal of my life was passed in the circus and among showmen, the name of P. T. Barnum comes naturally into my mind. He was certainly the prince of showmen—shrewd and businesslike in everything he touched, prompt to act, amazingly ingenious in devising novelties to attract the public, and a wonderful organiser. Before he died he had brought the working of his show, the biggest in the world in its variety of exploits, to a methodical perfection, and rarely did anything go wrong.

It can easily be imagined that when dates had been fixed for months ahead and contracts entered into as to the hiring of halls and grounds, strict punctuality had to be observed if money wasn't to be lost. The removal of such a gigantic show as Barnum's from place to place, often many miles distant from each other, was no easy matter. It meant much thought, the drilling of many men in their particular duties, and the working of everything smoothly and almost mechanically. How admirably all this was done never failed to surprise me, accustomed though I was to the process.

When the animals had finished their turn and while the rest of the performance was going on, they would be quietly removed in their cages to the train that was awaiting them. Scarcely was the show over when the tent master's whistle was heard and down fell the canvas walls of the big enclosure, gathered up, and before the people were out of the place, the ring, seats and so on

were removed. It was a big job, for the horses alone numbered 300, but the whole thing was done in about an hour, and hardly a word spoken by any one. All knew their work thoroughly. The show filled three trains. The first contained the sleeping cars and the last the menagerie. Some little excitement was often provided by the stowaways, who, to get a free ride, would hang on to various parts of the trains, hoping to escape notice, but they never did. A party always went round just before the signal was given to start, and routed the loafers with sticks, which were not taken for no purpose!

Barnum was of course an old man when I was engaged by him—he died, I think, in 1891—but age hadn't lessened his care over every detail and his personal watchfulness. One of my performances consisted of antics on the high stilts, and the impersonation of a tipsy man while in that elevated position was always a great success. My swaying about, pretending I was about to fall, and recovering myself, made the audience laugh, and at the same time gave them a thrill.

On one occasion I saw Barnum sitting in a front row watching me intently. After my turn he sent for me, and complimented me on the performance, "but," said he, "don't do it again. It's too dangerous."

Undoubtedly it was very risky, though I never had a tumble, and the consideration of Barnum for the safety of his company struck me as a good trait in his character. Most managers think only of the laugh and the applause of the audience, and the performer has to take a back seat so far as his bodily safety is concerned.

Barnum was a showman to the last. He never forgot that success in his line was a good deal dependent upon personal popularity, so he always kept in the limelight. One important item in his personal programme was the little speeches he was fond of making. I daresay in his best days they were effective enough, but in his declining years his voice became so weak that it was little better than a wheeze, and his words could not reach beyond a couple of rows or so of the stalls. This drawback made no difference to Barnum. It didn't matter much what he said, the great point was his appearance on the stage—he was as much a part of the show as any of the performers. He knew as well as, or better than anybody, that effect was all-important. The audience had to be impressed, no matter how it was done; so to bring this about, he always had a score or so of the miscellaneous helpers, tent men and so on, stationed among the audience, who punctuated his little speeches with stentorian shouts of "Bravo, Barnum!" and the like, and naturally the audience followed suit without knowing why or wherefore.

While with Barnum's show I made the acquaintance of General Tom Thumb. The little general had most charming manners, and was in every respect a perfect gentleman. I used to play billiards with him often; he had a fair amount of skill, notwithstanding his physical drawbacks. To get to the proper height for the board he had to stand upon a stool.

As a contrast to this diminutive player, I remember watching a game between Signor Foli and Frank Celli, a member of the clever Standing

family. Foli was born "Foley." He came from the sister isle and he Italianised his name, in deference I suppose to the feelings of the native operatic Italian artistes. He was quite six feet three (perhaps a little more) and Celli topped six feet. To see these two huge men sprawling half over the billiard table and bringing off long shots, disdainful of the "rest," had something of the grotesque about it. Perhaps they felt it was so themselves, for throughout the game they never ceased chaffing each other.

Sir Augustus Harris had a personality not easily forgotten. His mental activity was ceaseless. He knew what he wanted and he saw that he got it. He, too, was a born showman, inheriting the instinct no doubt from his father, who for many years was stage manager at the Italian opera, and whose artistic presentations of many famous operas would even in these days be regarded as scenic triumphs.

The elder Harris had a genius for "effect," whether on or off the stage. He was noted for wearing the silkiest and glossiest hats, and probably set the fashion which so many theatrical managers have followed down to the present time.

Harris regarded his glossy hat as a kind of fetish, and it was whispered that secretly he worshipped it. On one occasion at a rehearsal of the ballet everything went wrong. The girls were perverse, or frivolous, or in tantrums of some kind. Harris alternately coaxed and swore, but to no purpose. At last in despair he cast his cherished hat on the floor and stamped on it, exclaiming "There!" The effect was appalling; it was equivalent to a sounding of the last trump, and some

of the girls fainted. Nothing more could be done that day, but on the morrow all went like clock-work.

I've no doubt that Sir Augustus was quite capable of creating a characteristic situation like this, if circumstances demanded it. At any rate it is certain that wherever he was he had to be in the centre of the picture. I recollect the artist of a coloured poster to advertise the nautical melodramas once very popular at Drury Lane, submitting the design to Sir Augustus, then Mr. Harris. The licensee and manager was at that time playing in the pieces he produced, not that he was in any way a brilliant actor—I don't think he was under any illusions as to that—but in order to qualify himself in a claim for the Drury Lane Fund. The artist had produced a well-balanced picture and to carry out his design had found it advisable to put the hero in a somewhat subordinate position. Now Harris *was* the hero and he looked very doubtfully at the counterfeit representation of himself. Then he pointed to the foreground, remarking:

"H'm, very good—but I must be *there*!"

The poor artist was greatly distressed. The alteration would entirely upset the harmony of his design. But this was of no importance, the advertisement was the only thing that mattered, and from his point of view Sir Augustus was right.

Sir Augustus Harris no doubt had his weaknesses, but want of generosity was not one of them. I was first engaged by him when he was running Covent Garden Theatre. I had as clown become a great favourite with the children, so much so that

it seemed to me that I ought to have a benefit, and I suggested as much to Mr. Harris. "Certainly, my boy," said he, in his genial manner, and he at once told Mr. Latham to draw out a contract. The terms of the contract were that I was to have half of the takings after £500, but that I was to spend £100 on posters, etc., and I was to be given a month for advertising my benefit. We shook hands on the bargain, and with a twinkle in his eye which I could not make out at the time, but understood afterwards, he said I ought to make £10,000 on the night.

The benefit arrived in due course. It was to include an afternoon and evening performance. The show in the afternoon was very bad, and I was rather cast down. Everybody was, however, very encouraging and prophesied that at night the house wouldn't hold the crowds. The night came along and was worse than the afternoon. I was never so disheartened.

On the following day Augustus Harris came to the theatre to settle up with me. The first words he said were, "How did you get on last night?" "Rotten," I told him. He began to laugh. Said he, "I'll tell you a secret. You're all right in the arena or on the stage, but you're no good as a manager. Did you really think that with my eyes open I should let you have this theatre half to half after £500 with matinee and night show and give you a month to advertise it? I did it because I knew very well that all your friends—that is, the children—would have all gone back to school, but you wanted a benefit, so I humoured you. But you shall have a benefit,

and there it is," and he put into my hands a contract for three years right off at a very big salary; so that was what the twinkle in the eye meant.

On another occasion Augustus Harris put a good thing in my way, of which I did not take advantage, and I much regretted my refusal afterwards. From Covent Garden I went to Drury Lane, where the pantomime that year was to be "Beauty and the Beast." Lady Dunlo was to play "Beauty," and no one was better fitted, thanks to Nature's gifts, but the part of the "Beast" had not been settled. Mr. Harris sadly wanted me to take it, but at that time I was bent upon clowning, and so John D'Auban was engaged. But I had my chance afterwards when Harris opened at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Liverpool, with "Venus." The cast included Lady Dunlo (she played under the name she was best known by, Belle Bilton), Harry Nicholls and myself. In some respects this was a great advance, as henceforth my business was not entirely confined to clowning.

A comical incident happened during one of the rehearsals at Drury Lane for "Venus." I was cast for "Mercury," and it occurred to me that it would be an effective bit of fooling if I made my entry standing on a globe, and trundling it with my feet. I came in in this fashion, but I hadn't bargained for a chunk of wood a carpenter had left on the stage. I had just commenced to say: "I am 'Mercury,' newsman of the gods," when the globe and I parted company, I came flop on the stage and rolled over the footlights into the

orchestra, and on to a fiddler. Sir Augustus, who was present, laughed heartily—he always liked a joke—and enquired whether I was going to put the fall in at night? For fear of accidents it was decided to cut out this particular bit of business, and perhaps it was as well, for on this occasion it cost me 7s. 6d. to provide the fiddler with a new bow.

"Venus," I might mention, was an extravaganza. It was in three acts and had three authors —William Yardley, Edward Rose and Augustus Harris. The music was by John Crook.

The revels at Olympia which Sir Augustus organized I shall never forget. For real rollicking fun they have never had their equal. My connection with them came about in this way. I had finished a most successful pantomime season at the Court Theatre, Liverpool, and when the run was over Sir Augustus invited me to dinner at the Adelphi Hotel, where he was staying. After dinner he told me to report myself at his house, "The Elms," St. John's Wood, on the following Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock. I obeyed his instructions; we had lunch and he went to the 'phone and 'phoned to Arthur Sturgess, telling him I had arrived and that he was to bring the manuscript. Sturgess turned up in the afternoon with the script, which Sir Augustus handed to me, saying, "Here you are, my boy; go home and study it and come here a week to-day."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Hamlet in a Hurry," was his reply. "I want you to study it carefully. None of your

red-nosed comedian about it; you must play it straight."

I started aghast. I was getting fat and scant of breath. I could not imagine myself playing "Hamlet," the Prince of Denmark. I really thought he was going mad. However, I took the script home and studied it. I soon saw that Harris had been pulling my leg. The play was to be "Hamlet" sure enough, but the version of it to be performed at Richardson's show at Olympia—for this was the notion—would have turned what little hair the Bard possessed as white as snow.

I saw Sir Augustus the next morning at Drury Lane.

"Whimmy," said he, "I want you to get some of the oldest actors and actresses you can find for the cast."

I hunted London and pitched upon Joe Cave, Marie St. Gerard, Ainsley Burton, Gertie St. Clair, and one or two more. The whole business was a jolly farce. We had rehearsals in Harris's bathroom—a very spacious affair—at "The Elms," and things promised to go splendidly.

Meanwhile a Richardson's show was being built at Olympia. The interior was painted to represent a barn. The act drop was ornamented with Shakespeare's head on a pedestal and purposely drawn very groggy and lop-sided, and looking as if it were about to fall off. There were mock boxes supposed to be full of the notabilities of the day. Gladstone and his family were smiling at Lord Beaconsfield and his friends, who were smiling in return. The outside of the show was

quite the real thing with its big pictures of fat women, living skeletons and the like.

This makeshift look was only confined to the show itself. The dresses of the players were magnificent, both in material and colour. It was a characteristic of Sir Augustus that he would always have the best of everything. The black feather in my cap cost two or three pounds and the "Ghost" was resplendent in silver-plated armour. As for the robes of the King and Queen, they were simply dazzling. Outside, our band consisted of a cornet, trombone, flute and a big drum. A fine orchestral band was stationed opposite our show and did its best to play us down. But we contrived to score with our big drum. Sometimes "Hamlet" banged it and occasionally the "Ghost" would take a turn. Now and again the rival orchestra pelted us with oranges and I rather fancy that Sir Augustus, who had a number of friends with him and who was in the highest spirits, had a hand in this.

We used to give eight or nine performances a day, each one lasting half an hour or so, and the money rolled in without ceasing and the lowest price was sixpence. Fred Storey painted the scenery, opening with a representation of the battlements very much out of the perpendicular. As for the dialogue, it was after this style: The sentry was ordered to "form squares" which he did by squaring his feet. Enter "Hamlet," upon which the sentry remarked, "Here comes the Prince."

"How goes the night?" "Hamlet" enquired.

"Very well, thank you," was the reply. "How are you?"

This may not seem particular brilliant, but I suppose we made it sound funny, for the audience laughed uproariously.

The "Ghost" was a screaming success. The man who took this part was about 75 years of age and a raw-boned Scotchman, and when he opened his mouth and said, "Ye ken, I am yer father's ghost," in broad Scotch, the people yelled! We did three acts; we cut out all the long speeches, and when any of the players started upon one I would bring out my watch with:

"There's no time for that speech," to the player's intense disgust.

The Scotchman insisted upon having a pint of beer at every performance or he wouldn't play, so I gave him threepence per performance. Unfortunately the staff bar was a long way from the show, but he didn't care—he walked to it and got his beer all the same. It so happened that with all his armour on he had to pass a lot of shrubbery and small trees, and by the time of the fourth show of the day he would come back minus some of his armour. Finding it rather inconvenient, he had taken it off and laid it against the trees, and what with the beer going to his head he forgot where he put his corslet and helmet, or whatever it might be. After that I had to get a boy to watch him and bring back his armour. Once he came back very inebriated, but he got through his performance till the last speech, when he overbalanced himself, fell through the small stage door on to the gravel outside the show, and shouted to the amusement of the audience, "There's something rotten in the steps of this damned show."

Joe Cave, owing to his infirmity of temper, was a continual source of trouble. He was one of the most cantankerous men I ever came across and it is not too much to say he was very unpopular. In this travesty of "Hamlet" he was the grave-digger, and he was perpetually having rows with the "Ghost" and the manager. Why there should have been so many squabbles I can't understand, unless it was owing to the beer at the staff bar, which was certainly cheap and might have been the other thing as well. More than once I've seen "Ophelia" with a black eye. On one occasion Joe Cave reached the limit of fury. He and I were dining together and a mutual friend came behind Cave unseen by him and slapped him on the back—a habit particularly stupid and most annoying. It sent Joe into a paroxysm of rage, for he had false teeth, and the concussion shot the entire set into his soup! The language that followed was sultry of the sultriest.

Cave had been in the profession nearly all his life and no doubt he had the mysteries of management at his fingers' end, but owing to his abominable temper he was not a success. It may have been due to this cause that the transformed "Old Vic," which was rebuilt some five and thirty years ago, and of which he was the first manager, was a failure. Certainly it would be hard to match the fiasco on Christmas Eve of the dress rehearsal of the pantomime to which the public was admitted. Mishaps followed one after the other. The transformation scene haltingly commenced a little before midnight and the curtain descended amid the shrieking of ballet girls. Something had gone

wrong. Joe Cave rushed on to apologise. All that could be heard was his explanation that the building of the theatre and the pantomime had cost thousands and thousands of pounds. The sight of the excited little man, grey trousers below and some kind of pantomime costume above, was the funniest thing the audience had seen that night, and they roared.

Joe's claim to celebrity—and it is a claim unknown to most people—is that he made the popularity of the song, "I'm ninety-five—I'm ninety-five." The melody was taken from one of Bishop's operas, but who wrote the words I'm unable to say. The tune afterwards became the regimental marching air of the old City of London Volunteer Rifle Brigade. Cave ended his days in the Charterhouse, where he kept up his reputation of "old Grumpy," so much so that the brethren petitioned that he might have his dinner served in his own room, and the request was granted.

Cave's cantankerousness and the grumbles notwithstanding, Richardson's show was a tremendous hit, and Sir Henry Irving, John L. Toole, Phil May and others were constant visitors in front. Without a doubt Sir Augustus Harris was right when he forbade any clowning. If I had painted my nose I should have spoilt the effect. It was the taking of the play seriously that made it so funny.

I must say that after playing the part over and over again I got "Hamlet" into my blood and began to believe that if I tried hard enough I should end by being a tragedian. I couldn't help talking about him and I can't help airing

my views now. "Hamlet," like the weather, is a subject for eternal discussion. I feel it is only right that I should chip in with a word or two. "Hamlet's" trouble was undoubtedly indigestion; he took a bilious view of life. He was worried about his increasing weight and his sorrows turned to fat very quickly. I think we ought to pity rather than blame him for his unfortunate habit of talking to himself. His partiality for ghosts and graveyards must have made him rather a dreary companion on an Easter Bank Holiday, but I could have put up with that. What I cannot stand about "Hamlet" is his frightful rudeness to his mother! Jump on poor old dad if you must, kick uncle George out of the window if you like, but say one unkind word about mother, and the British Constitution totters on its base. After all, why shouldn't his mother marry again if she wanted to? She was accustomed to the little ways of kings and it was only natural that she should select another for her second venture! Besides, "Hamlet" must have found his step-father come in very handy when funds were low and he hadn't got the wherewithal for a fresh bilious attack. "Hamlet's" view of life was the view of "the morning after the night before."

CHAPTER XVI

My first engagement at Covent Garden. My performing pig. Its ultimate end. Some dog yarns. Animal trainers not cruel. "Verdun," the wonderful performing horse. How E. T. Smith swallowed a £1,000 note. A shadow in my life. My first panto at Drury Lane Theatre. A "great cab act." Comic film scenes indebted to the harlequinade. The decline of the harlequinade. The clown's difficulties with the orchestra. Royalty at the pantomime. I present Prineess Mary with a Christmas cracker. The cracker and the cats—a practical joke. The relief of Ladysmith—an excited audience. Arthur Roberts, the prince of "spoofers." Eseapades at a Sheffield hotel. Pressmen "spoofed" by a water chute. The "spooferies."

My first engagement at Covent Garden Theatre was as a circus clown. Sir Augustus Harris and Mr. Freeman Thomas, afterwards identified with the promenade concerts, subsequently given, took the theatre for a season, and ran it as a circus, Hengler's providing the entertainment. I have always been very successful with performing animals, and this time I was lucky in having a very clever pig. I'm not prepared to say which is the more intelligent, the pig or the donkey; whether or not, both are proof that four-footed animals have more brains that they know how to use than people suspect. This particular pig became greatly attached to me; it used to follow

Whimsical Walker as he appeared before H.M. Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, by command, Windsor Castle, 25th February, 1886

Whimsical Walker rehearsing a love scene with Miss Nancy Buckland, Drury Lane Theatre Stage

me about like a dog, and it was immensely popular with the company. Its fate was somewhat singular and due to a peculiar accident.

There was, of course, in the theatre a refreshment bar, which I imagine was the attraction which drew Mr. Freeman Thomas into the speculation, he being in the wine and spirit trade, and at the time was the proprietor of the "Griffin" in Villiers Street, Strand. One day a friend of mine dropped in before the performance commenced and suggested a drink at the bar. I accompanied him there, and so did the pig. My friend ordered a bottle of champagne and threw a sovereign on the counter. It bounced in the air and rolled on the ground, and "Tommy" the pig being always on the look out for unconsidered trifles, found the coin and swallowed it. I don't suppose the sovereign would have done him the least bit of harm, but unfortunately the circus grooms saw the coin disappear into his mouth and laid their plans accordingly. What their plan to get hold of the sovereign was I don't know, but they gave him medicine of some sort. I noticed him getting thinner and thinner every day, but did not at once suspect what was the matter. One morning poor "Tommy" was found lying in the cellar dead and it was pretty certain that poison was the cause. No post-mortem followed, which was a pity, as there was a possibility that the miscreants had not been successful and the sovereign would have been found; not that this would have been of the slightest importance, as I would have given many sovereigns rather than be deprived of my faithful companion.

A reward was offered to find out the man who poisoned the pig, but he was never discovered.

Intelligent as donkeys and pigs may be, they are distanced a long way by dogs. I once had a poodle which was the cleverest animal I ever had to do with. There was something almost uncanny in his imitative faculty. I had but to do a trick once and he grasped it at once. I may give an instance of this, which had it not been witnessed by myself would be considered incredible. I was breakfasting one morning when I saw the poodle gnawing my slippers, and it made me so angry that I seized him, knocked his head against the wall and threw him out of the window, which chanced to be open. He wasn't hurt, as he had but a very little distance to fall. The next morning he came in as usual, saw the slippers, and I imagine this reminded him of what had occurred the previous day, for he rushed to the wall, knocked his head against it, and then leaped out of the window. He thought he had learned a new trick.

Among the dogs which I have at various times possessed, was an Airedale terrier. It was not a performing animal, its chief peculiarity being that it had an abnormally long tail. And thereby hangs a tale. I parted with the dog to an army officer, who shortly afterwards went to India with his regiment. Some few years afterwards I met the officer on his return to the old country, and he said:

"Walker, that dog I got from you was a good investment; it saved my life upon one occasion."

I said I was glad to hear this, and asked for particulars.

"Well," said the officer, "one day in India, accompanied by the dog, I wandered quite a long distance from the cantonment and got lost in the jungle. For seven or eight hours I searched in vain for an outlet; I was not only dismayed, but as I had had no food for some time previously I was also starving. At length I came to a clearing where I gathered together some brushwood and lighted a fire. Famished as I was I was ravenous for food, so I called the faithful dog to my knee, cut off his tail, and ate the tail for supper. When I had finished I noticed the poor animal looking at me very piteously—it was also famished, so I gave the dog the bone to pick!" I don't vouch for the truth of this. It may be a *ben trovato*.

Of late there has been considerable controversy as to the training of performing animals. Humanitarians have got it into their heads—not for the first time—that much cruelty is involved in teaching them their tricks. While I was recently performing in the principal Midland towns the representative of a leading Lancashire paper put this question to me: "In your opinion is it possible to train animals to trick work by any method except kindness?"

"Utterly *impossible*," was my reply. "I have trained more performing animals than any other clown alive and I have found them ready to respond to kindness—always. The person who attempts to train an animal by cruelty *will never succeed*, and I say with knowledge ranging back over fifty years that there is not a single animal travelling

to-day that could have been trained in any other way. Kindness first, last and always is the foundation of success in training all animals. Come with me and I'll let you see for yourself the sort of animals we have in this show. I'll introduce you to a man who brought a horse from the brink of the grave to be the best trained and best mannered animal of the kind in existence."

The journalist accompanied me to the stables and I presented him to the well-known owner of the pantomime horse "Verdun." The trainer and owner of this clever animal is Mr. Agube Gudzow, whose deeds in the ring are world famous. "Verdun" was in his stall feeding and my friend was doubtful whether it was safe to disturb the horse while at his meal. The trainer smiled and in a moment "Verdun" had turned towards the visitor and placed his nose in the journalist's hand.

This horse, between which and Mr. Gudzow exists a strong bond of affection, has a very interesting history. "Verdun" is so named because he fought all through the later stages of the war that raged round the heroic French city. Gassed and suffering from shell shock, three times wounded, the noble animal was put up for auction in London. A foreign horse dealer bid £1 for the broken-down hero and it was going to feed the Dutch when Mr. Gudzow bid £5 and the horse was knocked down to him. To-day it is known all over the country, and in Hyde Park, when exercising in Rotten Row, people bring it enough sugar to satisfy a schoolboy.

I then took my friend to Mr. Fred Astley, the trainer of another celebrated performing horse,

"Black Prince." The idea of cruelty to this animal is out of the question, for the young stallion is not the sort of chap to stand any nonsense. Yet his act brings storms of applause, and when his performance is over master and horse lunch together!

Mr. Carlos Mier, another trainer, served this country throughout the war as a breaker-in of horses. He is known far and wide as an expert at his business and smiles sarcastically at the suggestion that cruelty is ever practised towards the animals. Mr. Mier brought from the army training ground at Market Harborough a dog that had been the pet of the soldiers. This clever animal is called "Spot," and the way he jumps to receive his master is evidence of his strong affection. I could give many other instances of the love which animals have for their trainers and I wish the people who have a wrong idea of this animal training business could spend five minutes in my company and go with me over a well-ordered show. I think after seeing for themselves the real state of things, they would discover that trainers and showmen associated with animals are almost universally keen lovers of our dumb friends, are the first to resent any ill-treatment, and have taken instant action in cases of cruelty of any sort which have come under their notice.

My pet pig's inadvertent swallowing of money reminds me of a curious episode at the old "Criterion" in the days when the long buffet was a favourite resort of men about town, and an equally favourite place for lunches and dinners. Mr. E. T. Smith and Mr. Jonas Levy, who combined the deputy chairmanship of the London and Brighton

Railway Company with dramatic criticism—he wrote the theatrical notices in *Lloyds News* for many years—were dining there with one or two friends when Mr. Howard Paul joined them. Howard Paul had just returned from America and was unusually exuberant.

His visit to America had proved very profitable, but the others did not know this. As a rule his pocket was somewhat low, and when he began to talk loudly about the money he'd made and flourished a £1,000 bank note as evidence, the party thought he was " codding " them. Howard Paul to be in possession of a £1,000 Bank of England note was too absurd for anything.

" Let me look at it," said E. T. Smith, and Howard Paul proudly handed it over to the lessee of Drury Lane Theatre.

Smith was having soup at the time, and no sooner had he hold of the note than he crumpled it into a ball, dropped it into the spoonful of soup he was raising to his mouth and swallowed it. Howard Paul's face went green and his eyes were distended with horror. E. T. Smith thought the note was bogus, whereas it was perfectly genuine.

What was to be done ? Nothing. Bank note paper was quite easy of digestion. The upshot was that everyone present had to make an affidavit to satisfy the bank that the note had really disappeared in the fashion described, but even then it was some three months before Howard Paul was comforted by another note. It is odd that the swallowed note should be a thousand pound one, for thousand pound notes had a peculiar

fascination for E. T. Smith. It is a fact that when any theatre or building that he favoured for show purposes was put up for sale by auction, "E. T." would bid for it, and when it was knocked down to him would flash a £1,000 note in the auctioneer's face as an earnest of his possession of means, and trust to chance to being able to raise the purchase money. If he failed, then the £1,000 note came in handy for a second attempt.

Sorrow is closely allied to gaiety, as I had too good reason to discover while Hengler's had Covent Garden. Just before my engagement at the theatre my wife was taken seriously ill, and I had her removed to Hull, my native place, where she would be among friends. I had reason to fear there were no hopes of her recovery, and after the season began at Covent Garden I would two or three times a week take the night mail train to Hull to see her and return to London the next morning in time for the morning performance. This constant travelling and anxiety told upon me terribly, and I arranged with the doctor to send a wire should she be taken worse. A telegram came to me in due course, but owing to its being addressed to Hengler's headquarters in Argyle Street, there was considerable delay before I got it. The message was as I feared—my wife was much worse. I set off for Hull at once and at Doncaster found a wire awaiting me, telling me that my poor wife was dead. She had, it appeared, died in her sleep. I went on to Hull and while I was standing at her bedside a telegram was brought me. It was from Covent Garden and ran, "Prince and Princess of Wales coming

to-night. Return if possible." I could do no good by staying at Hull. I rushed back to London and performed before their Royal Highnesses—how much my heart was aching, though possibly my face did not show it, I need not say—and hurried back for the funeral. The reaction after this terrible strain was too much to sustain. I had a nervous breakdown and was in bed for six weeks. Little did people think when I again was able to appear in the circus and was making them laugh how I felt inwardly, but the matter was kept a secret and no one knew.

Some time later, while at Drury Lane, I was going on to the stage in my clown's dress when a telegram was put into my hands, and I read, "Frank Walker died this morning at Carlisle of pneumonia." Frank Walker was my son. How I went through the pantomime of that night after the shock of this news I've no idea. I may have been funny, I can't say. Anyhow, I had to go through my "business" and I did it. The poor boy promised to do well in his profession, which was mine; he was a tremendous favourite with the Carlisle people, and some 5,000 followed him to his grave. So you see I had my ups and downs, with my face painted trying to make others laugh, and with deep sorrow in my heart.

I began at Drury Lane in 1891 with "Beauty and the Beast"; Lady Dunlo was "Beauty," John D'Auban the "Beast," and Vesta Tilley was also in the cast. In the harlequinade quite a number of the Leopold family took part. There were two clowns, myself and Harry Leopold. Fred Leopold was harlequin, and Joseph Leopold

pantaloon. The *Era* was good enough to say: "In the second scene, a model farmyard, Whimsical Walker in schoolboy attire introduced his wonderful whimsical singing donkey and added enormously to the amusement of the spectators in what we may call a great cab act."

This was some comic business which I fancy must have been suggested to me by the unpremeditated pranks I played in Dublin (already related), when I was chased by a policeman and evaded him by running round and underneath a horse and the constable falling down in the pursuit, the whole thing ending in my temporary sojourn in the police station. For pantomime purposes I amplified the episode by the addition of a four-wheeled cab—a real one, not a property affair. There was much the same chase by a stage policeman, only more so, as I was able to dart through the cab in at one door and out at the other with the policeman after me.

I am bound to say that royalty never turn their backs upon pantomime. The late King Edward, it is true, was not an enthusiastic patron, if indeed he can be called a patron at all, for I'm not aware that he ever was present at the "Drury Lane" pantomime, and I'm told that he did not care for this kind of show, but when a boy he frequently accompanied Queen Victoria. Queen Alexandra, on the other hand, very often came, accompanied by her grandchildren. I well remember on one occasion when introducing some "business" with Tom Smith's crackers, which included throwing a number among the audience, it occurred to me to present a cracker to the little

Princess Mary, who was in one of the boxes with other members of the royal family. Getting a ladder, I planted it against the box and mounted it, crackers in hand. My clown's white and red face in a queer headdress suddenly popping up over the edge of the box rather alarmed the small lady, I'm afraid. The clown is all very well at the distance, but near to must seem an awful figure, especially to a child's imaginative mind. I presented the cracker. I could see she didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. However, she mustered up courage to take a cracker from me and all went well, especially as she was rewarded for her graciousness by a huge burst of applause. As for the young prince, he looked upon the thing as a rare bit of fun, and at once entered into the spirit of it. This was the first visit of the Prince of Wales, his brother and Princess Mary to a pantomime.

This cracker "turn" was made a vehicle for a practical joke of which I was the victim. The "business" was first the lugging in of a gigantic cracker, which pantaloon and I, after some of the usual fooling, pulled and broke. It was stuffed with little crackers and then followed the distribution. One night the cracker was torn asunder, and out fell to my intense astonishment a bevy of cats. Quite a thrill went through the audience, it being naturally thought that the thing had been purposely arranged, and the thrill became excitement when the cats, scared beyond measure, scampered about the stage, some jumping into the orchestra, and others bounding into the private boxes, to the intense terror of the

occupants. I needn't say that I spotted the perpetrator in that incurable practical joker Dan Leno!

One had to keep an eye open for an opportunity to introduce a topical allusion. The greatest applause and enthusiasm I ever heard and witnessed in Drury Lane Theatre was at a matinee during the Boer War. Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell had just come off the stage when a telegram was put into Dan's hands. "Confound it," he groaned, "I wish I'd had this given me ten minutes ago. What a chance missed!" Then he brightened up. "Whimmy," said he, "read this and give it out." The telegram was "Relief of Ladysmith." Accordingly I went on and announced the news. Directly I had uttered the words I saw it was no good going on with my performance. The audience rose to its feet, shouted, threw up their hats, and some started singing the National Anthem. The curtain had to be rung down and the show brought to an end. Going out of the theatre the newspaper boys were rushing past with "Reported relief of Ladysmith" on the contents bills. The place was not relieved for a fortnight after and Dan then had his chance to make the announcement. But again he was defrauded by a premature bit of gag on the part of a precocious boy (afterwards well known as Jimmy Harrington) as related by Jimmy Glover.

The greatest bit of "spoof" that ever was done, I should think, was at Sheffield—with myself and Arthur Roberts. I was performing in "Venus," which Sir Augustus Harris had produced at the Alexandra Theatre, and Arthur Roberts was

at the Theatre Royal. I had a note from Arthur Roberts asking me to come up after the show, so I went and found a brougham waiting outside the Theatre Royal. It had been sent for him from the Maunch Hotel, where in fact we were all staying. I needn't say that Arthur Roberts was a born "spoofer" and never missed a chance of pulling somebody's leg. He sometimes got himself up so that even his own flymen did not recognise him. On this occasion he had a fur coat on and he looked more like a Russian than anything else. A stage hand was standing next to us with a clay pipe in his mouth, so Arthur began talking "cod" Russian to me and I was the interpreter. In the middle of this "cod" talk I turned round to this man saying: "The Prince from Moscow (meaning Arthur) wants to know if you'd like to go to his hotel and have supper with him. He's taken a liking to the British working men, he says they look so strong and healthy." So, with a little bit of persuasion, we got the man into the brougham and we were taken to the Maunch Hotel. As interpreter to the Prince I got our guest to go into a room by himself and told him to wash his face and make himself as presentable as he could.

In due time he came into our room, where there were Harry Nichols, Fred Latham, myself and Arthur Roberts. Arthur kept up his jabbering and of course I interpreted it, telling the man that the "Prince" was surprised to see what a small foot the man had for such a big fellow and wanted to know how he would look without his boots. The upshot was we got his boots off, then his coat and waistcoat, as his Highness would like to see

how many inches he was round the chest. Finally, we had everything off him except a little bit of red flannel that he had on his chest. When he was reduced to this extremity the man protested, saying: "I'll take nought else off," and we considerately left him with this bit of flannel! Finally we each gave him a couple of bob and sent him home. Then the manager of the hotel came upon the scene and there was something like a row, but we made it all right by treating the manager.

This was not the end of our "spoofing" enterprise. Our room was on the top floor of the hotel, and when Harry Nichols and Latham left us it was early in the morning and we heard the servants moving about. A bit of devilry came into our minds to do some statuary business with the table cloths, and when the domestics came into the room to tidy up they found Arthur on one table and me upon another, with white table cloths round us and a little bit of soot on our noses. Directly the girls saw these two ghostly figures on the table they screamed and fell down in a faint. I rushed to a hiding place, thinking it was a cupboard, got into it and found it was the lift, and I went with a horrible grinding noise right to the bottom. Where Arthur got to I don't know, but with the row everybody was out of bed, and of course we were asked to leave the hotel. But somehow we talked over the manager and he forgave us.

A third escapade and I've done with the Maunch Hotel. One night, or rather morning, Arthur and I came from the Arts Club on a conveyance which was not quite orthodox, or even respectable, being

in fact simply a street sweeper with a huge brush! Imagine the picture, two men sitting on a street sweeping machine at four in the morning, with silk hats on! We got to the hotel and they let us in through the iron latticed doors, which formed the entrance. No sooner were we inside than another idea occurred to us. Down we went on our hands and knees, crawling round and round and pretending to be wild beasts and occasionally growling through the bars at the artisans and colliers going to work. A frantic expostulation from the manager followed, but we made it up with him, so much so that when we were leaving he presented each of us with a knife!

The following, I think, may be called a natural "spoof"—it was certainly a "spoof" on the part of Dame Nature. I once visited a friend of mine who had taken a billiard saloon for the season in a well-known South Coast watering place. Luck was dead against him, for during the first few weeks there was scarcely one fine day, and though a few visitors were driven by the weather into his saloon matters were not much better there, because the skylight was a dreadfully leaky one. On my first visit to the saloon I found a couple of players engaged in a game, and my friend standing near each player in turn holding up an umbrella to keep the rain from splashing on the table and spoiling the strokes! There were only a few spectators, and these were in a high state of glee, and were constantly encouraging the players with cries of "In off the spot! In off the spot!" the said spot, in every instance, being a newly-made rainspot that had dropped from the skylight on to the green cloth. As these rain-

spots were continually appearing, the players had a great variety of choice for their strokes!

I remember a good example of an unintentional "spoof" which occurred when I was engaged at the Agricultural Hall in "China in London." This was the first time the water chute was introduced. It was then a great novelty, but was afterwards made familiar enough to the public at Earls Court.

The management invited the London Press to lunch, after which they were able to sample the chute. This performance was faithfully carried out—indeed too faithfully, and this is where the "spoof" came in. Special arrangements were made for the new amusement (?) by the construction of a water channel about three feet deep and six feet wide, which ran right round the hall. There was also a sort of miniature lake some ten feet square and ten feet deep near the stage. This was for the reception of Willie Beckwith, the famous swimmer, when he dived from the roof, a performance which always gave the audience the thrill of their lives. This lake had nothing to do with the chute, but fate ordained otherwise. The gentleman of the Press could no more see into the future than could ordinary people, and they took their seats in the boat gaily enough after being well fortified by the lunch. "Are you ready?" called out the man in charge. The Press answered as with one voice, "Yes," and down they went into the three feet channel. At least, this is what they should have done according to the programme, but someone or something had "blundered" and the boat dipped into the ten feet lake and shot out all the occupants! It was something like a scrum! I

did not read what was said in the papers about the incident. Maybe it was one of those slips concerning which the less said the better.

The art of "spoofing" was brought to a high state of perfection at the "Spooferies," that queer little club founded by Arthur Roberts and others in a court near the Adelphi Theatre, between the Strand and Maiden Lane. The premises consisted of one large room, originally, I fancy, intended for a cellar, and the "properties" were mainly a billiard table and a grill! The fun did not begin until about midnight and ended with the milk in the morning. Here I believe a number of victims were offered up for sacrifice after the fashion of the stage hand at Sheffield. Whether that episode suggested the subsequent game—for a mock game was invented—I am unable to say.

CHAPTER XVII

Pantomimes at old "Drury." A pantomime mishap. "Spoofing" a Hebe of the old Gaiety buffet. E. J. Odell's rebuke. Sitting on a corpse! Drury Lane memories. Lady Dunlo and the ham and beef shop. I play in Drury Lane panto from 1912 to 1920. Actors and actresses who have played in pantomimes. Jimmy Welch and the New Clown. Mr. Arthur Bourchier as clown in W. S. Gilbert's "Fairy's Dilemma." A Crystal Palace Pantomime. The Lupinos as children. Covent Garden fancy dress balls. "Codding" the first prize. Dan Leno as a policeman. Baddeley Twelfth Cake Festivities.

In 1895, after the death of Sir Augustus Harris, Mr. Slater Dundas, his partner, took the pantomime which had been so splendid a success at Drury Lane the year before, to the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and here I played the "Grand Vizier" and was also the clown in the harlequinade. The Birmingham people were delighted with it and one newspaper declared that "no more successful and brilliant pantomime has been seen in this city for many a day."

The year 1898 saw me back at Drury Lane, and here I remained for several successive seasons. The pantomime of that year was "The Forty Thieves," by Arthur Sturgess and Arthur Collins. Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell were now established favourites and I think I found my clowning in the harlequinade was appreciated. The pantaloon was Car Waller, the harlequin Tom

Cusden, and the columbine Ruth Jezard. The pantomime of the following year was "Jack and the Beanstalk," also with Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell to provide the fun previous to the harlequinade. The cast in the latter was the same as in the preceding season.

In the "Sleeping Beauty and the Beast," by Jay Hickory Wood and Arthur Collins (1900-1901), the comic element was strengthened by the addition of the late Fred Emney, and he with Dan and Herbert made an unapproachable trio of humorists. They also took the principal characters in the "Bluebeard" of 1901-02, one of the most successful pantomimes Mr. Collins ever produced. As a rule the harlequinade is dismissed by the Press with a very brief reference, but on this occasion one newspaper thought it worthy of almost an extended notice. In describing a scene which is supposed to represent a seaside pier, the critic wrote: "The pantaloon and the clown take possession of a coffee stall and are greatly troubled by the dishonesty and vagaries of their customers. Finally a tall, thin and starved-looking vocalist takes up a position on the pier and begins to warble 'Queen of my Heart.' Nothing will remove this obstinately persevering singer. The clown and the pantaloon belabour him vigorously with boards, but all in vain. He is there and there he remains till the fall of the curtain, still chanting Alfred Cellier's serenade. Whimsical Walker is a very funny clown and works hard to keep things moving." Well, I won't contradict this statement.

During the performance of one pantomime—

I forget which one—I had a curious mishap. During my last visit to America I was very ill—it was the time when I experienced the discomforts of a Seattle hospital—and on my return to England I was told that the root of the evil lay with my teeth and that I must have them out. A dentist extracted them accordingly, but when it came to a question of a new set something went wrong. The expert paid me numerous visits, swallowed numerous nips of my whisky, besides money on account, but no false teeth were forthcoming. Finally he disappeared and I was left minus dentist, minus teeth. I had to endure much chaffing from my comrades owing to my transformed facial appearance. I got tired of being called "Old Gummy" and I was fitted with a set of teeth by another dentist. But like the majority of false teeth they were always more or less a source of trouble, and one night in a pantomime "rally" the comic policeman banged me on the back, my teeth went flying and rolled over the footlights into the orchestra and hit a fiddler in the eye!

In the old pantomime days of Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres life went merrily enough, both on and off the boards. Drury Lane then really existed. To-day it would be difficult to fix the exact spot where it made its way into the Strand. It has been "improved" into an ugly gaunt street. I suppose the "improvements" were necessary, but personally I prefer the old, nondescript, out-at-elbows thoroughfare. I've had many unexpected situations thrust upon me in the "Lane."

Once after a long and tedious rehearsal I went to a hairdresser's close to the theatre to get freshened up. I was so dead beat that I fell asleep in the chair, and when the barber woke me (for payment of course) I discovered he had treated me to a perfect prison crop! I was very much annoyed and I owe him for that hair-cut yet. While I was strolling down the "Lane" into the Strand, feeling as if I'd just been released from Wormwood Scrubbs, I met, I think, Herbert Campbell, and we wandered into the "Gaiety" bar, once the happy hunting ground of the high-collared crutch and toothpick brigade, and also known as "Prossers'" Avenue. Suddenly he noticed my shorn head and he exclaimed very audibly: "Hullo, Whimmy, when did they let you out?" "Only this morning," said I, quite seriously. He followed this up by enquiring sympathetically whether I had been treated well. "No," I rejoined, "the Governor was a brute; kept me on the treadmill until the last moment." The Hebe of the buffet was of the proud and 'aughty variety for which the "Gaiety" bar was famed. She was all eyes and ears, so we carried on in the way we had begun until she believed we were two of the most desperate crooks in London, and when we ordered our drinks she refused to serve us. We protested, but the mischief was done, and a big man in livery came up and suggested that the "Gaiety" was not the place for such as us, but that we'd better try Bow Street police station! We did not contest the point, but went on to the "Wellington," opposite the stage door of the old Gaiety

Theatre, and started a fresh topic of conversation.

One wanted a good deal of command of one's temper to tackle any of these wonderful young females should she be listening to the vapid cackle of some smirking youth, all collar and cuffs, when you asked her to serve you. You might have been addressing one of the statues in a suburban tea garden for any notice she took of you. She *might* condescend to attend to your wants if she thought fit, or she might not, but instead would make a sign to some other damsel. Anyhow you had to accept the snub. She was thoroughly mistress of the position. E. J. Odell it was, I believe, who once launched a sarcastic dart when treated thusly. He turned to his companion, and in his deep, distinctive, sustained tones remarked with a sigh of regret: "And I'm told there were once pretty girls here!" Whether he got his drink the quicker for this rebuke history doesn't relate.

Another recollection of the "Lane" was of quite a different character.

I was on speaking terms with an undertaker there and he once invited me into his shop and brought out a bottle of whisky. I sat myself down on something covered with black cloth and we hobnobbed together in friendly fashion. The undertaker was an enthusiastic theatre-goer. He knew a host of "stars" by sight and had acquaintance with a few of the lesser lights. We talked theatrical "shop" and I happened to ask the undertaker if he knew what had become of a certain actor whom I mentioned by name.

"Yes," said the man composedly, "you're a-sitting on him now!" I jumped from the black covered something and hurried away, leaving my whisky behind me. It was some few minutes before I recovered from the shock.

The mention of Drury Lane and its surroundings bring back a host of memories—some of them sad ones. So many old associates, so many old landmarks have passed away. The "Albion," with its pleasant suppers and merry talk, the "Wellington" and its "Gaiety mixture"—a concoction of whisky cold with a slice of lemon—the invention of Bob Soutar, who with Meyer Lutz, the clever musical conductor of the "Gaiety," and many, many others used to foregather in the narrow saloon bar.

There was more Bohemianism and less glitter and "swank" then than now. One can hardly imagine to-day a lady of title, the "star" of a Drury Lane pantomime, sharing sandwiches—and enjoying them too—with the clown amid a crowd in a ham and beef shop! Yet I've had this pleasure with Lady Dunlo more than once in the celebrated ham and beef shop at the corner of Bow Street and Russell Street, opposite the "Albion." But what sandwiches they were! The best in London. Such white and well-made bread, such juicy ham and such liberal measure of the latter were to be found nowhere else. The glory of those sandwiches and that ham and beef shop has passed away. It is now a potato dealer's!

Years of pantomime work at Drury Lane followed, without a break in the harlequinade so far as I was concerned. "Mother Goose,"

"Humpty Dumpty," "The White Cat," "Cinderella," all were highly successful. Then came a long break and I went back in 1912, when the attraction was the "Sleeping Beauty," by the late G. R. Sims and Arthur Collins. The public highly favoured this old fairy tale, and Mr. Sims and Mr. Collins collaborated the next two years in variations of the story under the titles of "The Sleeping Beauty Reawakened," and "The Sleeping Beauty Beautified." Then came "Puss in Boats," and as the sequels to the "Sleeping Beauty" had proved to be popular the experiment was tried with "Puss in Boats," which in 1916-17 became "Puss in New Boots." In "Aladdin" in 1918 two new pantomime writers, Mr. Frederick Anstey and Mr. Frank Dix, joined Mr. Arthur Collins, and Mr. Dix and Mr. Collins were responsible for the pantomimes of the "Babes in the Wood" and "Cinderella" in 1919 and 1920 respectively.

In the pantomimes above mentioned I had a share of the old harlequinade business, which was preserved, or as much of it as I was allowed to produce.

From time to time appeared various actors and actresses whose names are generally associated with branches of the profession other than pantomime. The names of Lionel Rignold, Sophie Larkin in "Cinderella" in 1895 (Sophie Larkin was never what one would call a beautiful woman, and I suppose it was one of life's little ironies which caused her to be cast as one of the "Ugly Sisters"); Clara Jecks in "Aladdin," Walter Passmore and Emily Spiller in "Cinderella" (1905), George Graves, George Barrett, Austin Melford, Florence Smithson,

Charles Rock, Madge Titherage, Robert Hale, and last but not least, James Welch, who played "Prince Patter" in "The White Cat" (1914). It was his only appearance in pantomime and he could hardly have felt at home. All the same he gathered a few hints which came in handy in his memorable performance in "The New Clown." I might say that I had the privilege of "making him up" in this part, which he created and made his own.

Jimmy Welch was not the only actor to play clown whom I assisted in this way. Mr. Arthur Bourchier essayed the character in W. S. Gilbert's "Fairy's Dilemma" and his "make up" was due to me. Mr. Gilbert has occasionally been represented as being somewhat overbearing and given to interference. I can only say I did not find him so. Indeed, he was rather the reverse, and I have in my possession a pin which he gave me as an appreciation of my humble services. I fancy that in his heart the author of the Bab ballads had a great liking for pantomimes. Did he not play harlequin at the Gaiety in the amateur pantomime produced there in 1878?

Others who in the 'nineties were then children, have since become popular actors, notably Barry and Stanley Lupino. In 1897 I ran a pantomime at the Crystal Palace in partnership with Mr. George Lupino and Mrs. Lupino, the parents of Barry and Stanley. We opened on Easter Monday with "Robinson Crusoe," and we gave several shows during the day. The cast was as follows: Mrs. George Lupino, "Robinson"; George Lupino, "Friday"; Barry Lupino, "the Cat"; and myself, "Mrs. Robinson Crusoe." There were also three

other artistes. The outlay over the production was not costly and we did exceedingly well with our five performances on Easter Monday. But as the week drew nearer its end the treasury became smaller and smaller. The weather was against us. It was terribly bitter and we were all laid up with colds. I remember Stanley and Mark—two quaint little chaps—crying at the wings with cold and their mother throwing in a few remarks, sometimes of remonstrance and sometimes consolation. Stanley has no need to cry nowadays. He is a clever and successful actor. His business is to make people laugh, and right well he does it.

My recollections of Drury Lane and Covent Garden would not be complete without some mention of the fancy dress balls which were once so great a feature of the "Covent Garden" winter seasons. Sir Augustus Harris enjoyed these revelries thoroughly, but he had an eye to business all the same. It was only human to seize the opportunity to exploit his Drury Lane Pantomime Company. Prizes of a princely value were offered, such as a carriage and pair, for the best and most original dresses; and Dan Leno, Herbert Campbell and myself were competitors. One or the other always carried off the first prize, but never landed one! It was, to use Arthur Roberts' beautiful word, "spoof." I remember that Dan Leno on one occasion personated a policeman, and got into a squabble with a genuine "copper" outside the theatre and was collared for obstruction! It was a merry time.

Then there were the Baddeley Cake celebrations on Twelfth Night, got up by Sir Augustus Harris on

a scale little dreamt of by the old actor who conceived the idea and left money to carry it out. The demeanour of Sir Augustus Harris on these and other functions of which he was the prime mover struck me as very characteristic. He was practically the host, but he never introduced himself into the proceedings in this capacity, yet was always in evidence. It was as though he was saying, "Here you are, my friends, I've done my best for you. Do what you like and enjoy yourselves, but don't take any notice of me"; an attitude which made the visitors crowd round him all the more.

It is not too much to say that when Sir Augustus Harris died I lost one of the dearest friends and the best manager I ever had. I cannot imagine a greater contrast than between his treatment of me and that of a certain circus proprietor into whose pocket I put many hundreds of pounds. All circus proprietors, however, are not like this. A former head—now passed away—of the particular firm I have in my mind was not. He was a gentleman.

CHAPTER XVIII

American comic films an imitation of the English harlequinade. Charlie Chaplin's "method." The modern pantomime not produced for children. The clown's "business" spoilt by the orchestra. A defence of the harlequinade. Grimaldi and summer pantomimes. What a pantomime should be. A suggestion. The best clowns with circus experience. The art of pantomime running in families. The Leopolds, the Vokes family, the Lupinos. The difference between a circus and a pantomime clown. Watty Hillyard, Wallet and Tom Matthews. Mr. W. S. Gilbert as harlequin. W. J. Payne, the "King of Pantomime." How Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell worked together. The clown of the harlequinade works by himself. Sausages and the red-hot poker. The origin of the clown. Eighteenth century pantomimes. Grimaldi. Other famous clowns. How old circus jokes were made. A plea for the revival of the harlequinade.

It seems to me that much of the comic stuff which comes from America on the films is simply an exaggerated form of the old knock-about harlequinade "business" of the English pantomime. The disappearances and transformations which followed a tap of the harlequinade's magic wand have been taken bodily and worked out in an outrageously burlesque form. But in the film the effect of magic is absent; the ingenuity of the property master in the pantomime had really a suggestion of the black art about it. The lather

or whitewash with which the clown plays such pranks reappears on the film with a monotonous repetition which has become terribly wearisome. Even the agile leaps of the harlequin have been appropriated. I make bold to say that nearly every artifice in the so-called "comedy" films is based on the "business" of the old harlequinade.

Even Charlie Chaplin's shows are akin to the clown's knock-abouts and tumbles. They are of course not in the same street with the stereotyped idiotic "comedy" films which have neither rhyme nor reason. Charlie Chaplin is a great artist. His facial fertility is inimitable and so are his body contortions. Method and the art of surprise are always at his command, and his sense of the ludicrous is wonderfully keen. But at the bottom of his productions is the clown's business, and this is a sure laughter getter.

Charlie Chaplin, as all the world knows, made a hit in Fred Karno's "The Mumming Birds," and he was as successful with this on his first visit to America as in England. But his second visit with the "Wow Wows," of which company I was a member, as already mentioned, did not altogether please the American public, which has an unpleasant habit of making up its mind beforehand what it is going to like. My experience is that our American cousins, in spite of their "go ahead" reputation, are slow to accept novelties, especially if they're not of native production, and the audiences having identified Charlie Chaplin with a certain eccentric and mirth provoking personage were disappointed at not finding the same gentleman. Anyhow, Charlie

Chaplin has now found fame and fortune in the States. This cannot be said of other music hall "stars" who have crossed the Atlantic. Mr. H. G. Hibbert, in his "Fifty Years of a Londoner's Life," reminds us that Jenny Hill, the popular "Vital Spark," was a comparative failure. Albert Chevalier was hardly a success, certainly not a great one. Dan Leno did not go down at all; Chirgwin took the first boat home. The gentleman who did not like my appearance in my clown's dress and wanted to express his feelings by putting a bullet through me is, I am afraid, typical of many Americans. Was not a Western audience once beseeched not to shoot the pianist, as he was doing his best?

Whether I am right or wrong as to the indebtedness of comedy films to the harlequinade perhaps doesn't matter very much; the point is that the cinema crowds laugh at the grotesque situations pictured, and this I needn't say is the object of the clown's antics and the practical jokes he plays. The essence of the whole thing is an illustration of the principle laid down by a philosophical student of human nature, that there was something in the misfortunes of our dearest friends not altogether unpleasing to us. I contend that the way people are tickled by film fun makes it all the more puzzling why harlequinades are for the moment things of the past, since the knockabout material in the harlequinade is the same in both. I take it that of late years pantomimes have been produced to attract the grown-ups rather than the children. When a harlequinade is introduced it forms but a small portion of the enter-

tainments and comes in when the audience is getting tired, and when many, after the queer English fashion, are hurrying away. Why certain playgoers are so afraid of the fall of the curtain has always been a mystery to me.

What, however, is especially annoying to the clown and to the other members of the harlequinade is the indifference, not to say contempt, of the orchestra for the whole thing. It's pretty clear that the fiddlers, the flautists, the cornet and trombone players and the rest, look upon the harlequinade as something which keeps them out of their beds. Often I've been disconcerted by the whispered entreaties from the gentlemen below "to get on with it," "hurry up," "we want to get away," and the like. What chance has anyone to introduce an impromptu bit of business—and an impromptu sometimes makes a great hit—when he's having his pitch queered in this fashion? I declare that not a few times I've had a good wheeze quite spoiled by a vicious bang on the big drum at the wrong moment.

People's sense of humour is much the same now as it ever was—not so coarse, perhaps—but this is the only difference. Flexmore, a famous clown of the 'forties and 'fifties, indulged in a broadness which wouldn't now be tolerated, otherwise he carried on the tradition of Grimaldi, and this tradition has in a way been preserved to the present day.

We are told by some superior folk that the harlequinade of the old school was based on brutality. So also was Punch and Judy. It is also said to be vulgar. Can it be more vulgar

than some of the revues with which the public have been favoured during recent years? I contend that the clown's "business" is honest humour with a distinct note of human nature in it which appeals to one's instincts for mirth. The pit and gallery have always recognised this openly, but I am afraid that managers nowadays think more of the boxes, the stalls and the dress circle; and the pit and gallery have literally to take a back seat. At one time the reverse was the case.

It is a very remarkable fact that in the palmy days of the pantomime Christmas was not the only time when clown and pantaloon played their pranks. Pantomime really seemed to go on all the year round. Grimaldi many a time sang his famous songs, "Tippity-witchet" and "Hot codlins" in the blazing days of July! In this particular month in 1823 at the Coburg Theatre (now the "Old Vic") no less than three pantomimes were produced. "Salmagundi," or the "Clown's dish of sorts," a mixture of the harlequinade of previous years, was played on July 1st and ran for six nights; on the 8th came "Harlequin and the Three Wishes," or "Puck and the Black Pudding," and on the 15th "Disputes in China," or "Harlequin and the Kong Merchants," and in each Grimaldi was the clown. True, Grimaldi was a genius, and it was to see him that the theatre was packed nightly, but it was pantomime all the same and more—it was almost entirely what we have come to call the harlequinade.

I needn't try to trace the causes of the decline of the harlequinade and why the "story" with

its gorgeous scenery and the introduction of music-hall " stars " have gradually pushed it into a sort of afterthought. The taste of the public may have changed (though I do not think it has) or the desire for novelty on the part of managers may have had something to do with it. Whatever may be the reason, it is pretty clear that at present the harlequinade is little better than a thing of shreds and patches.

It may be argued that I, as a professional clown, am prejudiced in this respect, but I still maintain that the harlequinade does not receive that attention from the managers to which, by reason of its historical associations and power of attraction, it is entitled, and I am quite certain that thousands of parents throughout the United Kingdom will support me in that opinion.

There are many people who seldom, or never, go to a theatre except at pantomime time. To them it is a paternal duty to give the children an opportunity of enjoying the rollicking pranks of clown, pantaloon, and policeman, and to gaze in rapture at the graceful evolutions of harlequin and columbine. To such parents the curtailment of the harlequinade is a distinct disappointment and a source of regret, if not of offence. I will undertake to say if a poll of the realm were taken on the question of retaining or abolishing the harlequinade, the result would be an overwhelming majority in favour of the clown and his acolytes. Not only do the children enjoy the fun, but the parents are made to feel young again, and the spectacle of their youngsters screaming with laughter and clapping their hands, does them good

in body and spirit, and takes them out of themselves.

Many a time I have had to go on the stage when in indifferent health, and the burst of hearty greeting from the kiddies has driven away all symptoms of indisposition, and has been far more beneficial than a dose of the most expert doctor's medicine.

Pantomimes were originally intended almost solely for the entertaining of the younger generation, and the first part was always described as the "opening." It was, and still is, the harlequinade that follows which the youngsters looked forward to with delighted longing; their merry laughter and shrill cries of excited joy, as the fun proceeded, in surprise after surprise, were a pleasure to the older members of the audience, who felt that they were duly rewarded for having brought the children to revel in the frolics of "Joey," their bosom favourite and cherished idol.

An old friend of mine in the theatrical profession once seriously suggested that the harlequinade, instead of being the "tag" of a pantomime, should be put on the first scene or early in the "opening." Further, my friend urged that his proposed plan could be easily carried out without much offence to the traditional proprieties by a reversal of the old system of converting, in the transformation scene, the wicked Baron into clown, the fairy Prince into harlequin, and so on with the other characters. The clown could be converted by the fairy Queen into the wicked Baron, the harlequin into "principal boy," the columbine into "principal girl," and similar transformations effected with the other characters.

Having many years' experience of pantomimes, I have learned what fantastic tricks authorised stage managers can play with original schemes, and I see no insurmountable difficulty in the adoption of my friend's suggestion. After all, a so-called pantomime with no harlequinade, or with the mere apology for one, is no pantomime at all, but simply a glorified revue.

But with a revival of the harlequinade comes a difficult question. Where are the clowns to come from? Clowns, like poets, are born, not made; the taste must be in one, and it is not against you if you haven't been blest with beauty. Grimaldi would have been nothing without his mirth-provoking face. The same may be said of comedians, but there is a difference. The comedian personates many characters, the poor clown has but one. The comedian has all the advantage of an eccentric dress, of an eccentric make-up; the clown can only have one costume, and red and white paint obliterates all his facial play. Moreover, whatever natural talent he may possess for fooling, it is of not much good unless he has had the training and has started young.

Nearly all successful pantomimists have commenced learning their art almost as soon as they were out of the cradle. It is singular that the particular gift of mumming often runs in families. Grimaldi's father and grandfather were dancers, and Joe was not two years old when he made his first appearance on the stage. The Leopolds with their uncle Edward Giovanelli, of Highbury Barn fame, the Vokes family and the Lupinos, are examples. Pantomime training is very difficult

nowadays. When the old-time travelling circus and mumming both were in their glory it was easy enough, and if I had my time to go over again I would begin in a travelling circus; as, apart from the varied experience, you have the open-air life, and the happy-go-lucky way of looking at things.

There is a great difference between the circus and the pantomime clown, and I think I can say I am master of what both have to do, as I have spent thirty years of my life in each capacity. A circus clown has to knock about, tumble, crack wheezes, and do without properties. The work is a hundred times harder than in a pantomime. You must, in addition, be apprenticed to the circus fun, whereas to be a pantomime clown an apprenticeship isn't necessary. One of the first pantomime clowns I ever saw was Watty Hillyard, who commenced as a circus clown with John and George Sanger. A capital circus clown also was Wallet, who revived the old title, in abeyance since the time of James I, of the "Queen's Jester." He was a fine acrobat and moreover wrote a book giving an account of his early life as a circus clown. Dan Leno, after his performance before royalty, aspired to be called the "King's Jester," and in his last sad days, in his moments of "exaltation" he fancied he had the power of conferring titles upon all and sundry. Paul Herring, who began his career in the circus, was, I think, the best pantaloon of his day.

Among the celebrated clowns of old Victorian times was Tom Matthews, who founded his style on Grimaldi's. He was nothing of an acrobat, but according to H. J. Byron he "relied on a jolly

round face, a mouth like Piccadilly Circus, a rich semi-hoarse roaring voice and undoubted powers of pantomime . . . . though Tom Barry exceeded everybody as a circus clown." Writing in 1879 Mr. Byron said: "Pantaloons and harlequins are probably pretty much the same as they have been for years, though the former are too apt to talk and the latter think more of dancing than of the supposed attributes of the owner of the magic bat. When Mr. W. S. Gilbert played harlequin I saw for the first time for years a consistent impersonation of the character. Albeit further practice and increased confidence might have improved certain small details, the representation as a piece of sustained pantomime action with a meaning in it was, I admit, to me refreshing."

I am afraid that if the clown is not appreciated as he used to be, still less is the harlequin. A month or so before the words quoted above were written, W. J. Payne (the founder of another pantomimic family—Harry Payne, the well-known clown, was his son), who was termed the "King of Pantomime," died. W. J. Payne was trained under Grimaldi and Bologna, the harlequin of Grimaldi's day; and appeared first as clown and afterwards as harlequin. In his prime the essence of pantomime was dumb show, and of this art he was a perfect master. "In each of his gestures," wrote Mr. Clement Scott in the *Theatre Magazine*, "there was an intelligible meaning. His imperturbably serious air in the most comic situations was one of his strongest points. The mask he wore did not entirely cover his face, and the play of his features could be distinctly

Mr. and Mrs. W. Walker at their home at Peggotty's Hut, Gorleston-on-Sea, with their mascot cat "Whimmy"

Whimsical Walker enjoying the sea air Gorleston-on-Sea

seen. . . . . Both old and young could understand and enjoy such humour as his."

It may be said that children are not so imaginative as they used to be; that the modern cramming system of education by competition has killed the natural instinct for boisterous, unrestrained fun. Left to themselves I don't think this would be the effect. I've no doubt that there are some priggish youngsters who may look down with pitying contempt on clown and pantaloon as too kiddish for them, but I'm quite sure the natural healthy child loves both.

The harlequinade is one of the traditional institutions of the stage which has a firm hold on the affections of the people—an affection which has been transferred from generation to generation, and it always will have a great attraction for the young. Kept clean and wholesome it will live as long as there is a theatre in the country. From royalty downwards through all ranks of society, everyone has a warm corner in his or her heart for clown, pantaloon, harlequin and columbine.

Of course a good deal of the clown's fooling is traditional, and this to an extent makes him independent of the stage manager, but there is nothing to prevent him inventing fresh business, as indeed I have often done. He has only the pantaloon to consider, and this simplifies matters. Now in the opening the "stars" have to fit themselves into the story and adapt their humour and characteristics by which they gained their name on the music hall stage to the various situations, and also have an eye to the other

actors. Dan Leno in an interview with an *Era* representative is made to say—

"In my first London pantomime at the Surrey the low comedians used to spend half the day working out "business" together. We thoroughly enjoyed the fun. But at Drury Lane it is all so different. We hardly knew where to find each other. I declare on the first night we were like so many pieces on a chess board just moved here and there by the stage manager. In time this feeling diminishes, but Herbert Campbell and I never get a real chance of working up fun together." Whether this puzzled feeling referred to the Augustus Harris régime or to that of Mr. Arthur Collins I am unable to say. Anyhow, a passage in Mr. Jimmy Glover's reminiscences ("Jimmy Glover, his book") is pertinent to the matter. "Nearly everything," writes Mr. Glover, "in which he (Dan) succeeded at the 'Lane' he was 'written for . . . . . .' Leno's successes with Harris were as nothing compared with his triumphs with Collins. Harris let him come on and simply be 'Dan Leno.' Collins thought out the Leno style and gave him the Leno material for the Leno triumph. Every funny situation or scene was built for him, first by the producer and then written round by the librettist. He had the least initiative sense of humour of anyone I ever met; once provided with the material he had the best contributory and constructive power."

It is the reverse of this where the harlequinade is concerned. The clown and pantaloon have nothing to do with the comedians in the opening —in fact they never meet. I write and produce

all my scenes and comic business myself, and I am my own stage manager. I, of course, make Mr. Collins acquainted with all I have to do, and he does not interfere, so that if my efforts are a success or a failure the entire responsibility rests with me. But there are two important properties which I *must* have. One is the sausages and the other the red hot poker. The children insist upon having these and would not consider the clown worth much if he left them out.

I have often wondered why a clown had such a fancy for sausages. Of course, when purloined they were easy to slip into his capacious pocket, but this isn't altogether a satisfying explanation. They may or may not have been first thought of by Grimaldi, but pantomime history is silent on this important matter. Discussing the matter with a literary friend accustomed to research he was equally blank, but he undertook to try to solve the puzzle. At the same time he remarked that there was not the same difficulty with the red-hot poker, as it had been made use of as a practical joke from time immemorial, certainly as far back as Chaucer, the broad jape in "The Miller's Tale" to wit.

However, he set to work and found that the industrious Mr. W. J. Thoms had dug up all that can be said about clowns. The harlequin, as most people know, had its origin in Italy, and was practically introduced here by Rich (who called himself Lun) at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. But the Italian harlequin was not quite the same as the English one. Indeed, he seems to have undertaken the knock-about business which now

belongs to the clown. Addison says: "Harlequin's part is made up of blunders and absurdities; he is to mistake one name for another, to forget his errands, to stumble over queens, and to run his head against every post that comes in his way. This is all attended with something so comical in the voice and gestures that a man who is sensible of the folly of the part can hardly forbear to be pleased with it.

When pantomime was first played in England is difficult to establish, but a dancing master at Shrewsbury, one Follet, has the credit. His entertainment, "The Tavern Bilkers," produced at Drury Lane in 1702, was entirely done in pantomime. It was only played for five nights. Follet's next invention, the "Loves of Mars and Venus," in 1716, also at Drury Lane, was far more successful. The new show caught the taste of the town, and in 1717 some dancers from France and a German named Swartz, with two dogs who could dance a minuet, became the rage, and the legitimate drama, in spite of the acting of Booth, Wilks and Cibber, was neglected.

With Grimaldi the clown came into his own, Leigh Hunt describes him as "round-faced, goggle-eyed, knock-kneed, but agile to a degree of the dislocated, with a great smear for his mouth, and a cap on his head half fool's, half cook's." Grimaldi invented the clown and his tricks as we know both to-day, and it is pretty certain that the introduction of sausages is his. Mr. Thoms says "the clown of the present day is indubitably descended from one common stock—Punch," and he points out that so recently as 1800 the character of Punch was

substituted for that of the clown in the pantomime of Harlequin, "Amulet, or the Magic of Mons."

We learn further that the clown of the present day seems gradually to have appropriated the peculiarities of harlequin, clown and pierrot. The pierrot is not often seen in modern pantomime, but we have occasionally had skilled acrobats figuring as "sprites." The first clown who combined the three characters was Follet, whose antics were greatly relished by George the Third. "Farmer George" indeed is said to have repeatedly attended Follet's performances for the express purpose of seeing him in one of his celebrated tricks, swallowing a carrot!

Delpini, Laurent, Bradbury, Paulo, and Southby were famous clowns, but all were topped by Grimaldi. As for the circus clown, Mr. Thoms remarks that he had "a certain series of standard jokes which remained unchanged for twenty years." Very singular is the statement that these old jokes were for the most part coined by the Westminster scholars, and brought out at Astley's, where the clown having been coached up and properly instructed how to introduce them, used to fire them off, the rival makers listening with the greatest anxiety to ascertain which told best. Those which were most successful became of course stock jokes.

And this is all that my friend could find out about clowns. I suspect that the character was gradually worked up by easy stages, and that save in the case of Grimaldi there was no sudden advance. But Grimaldi was a genius and an artist. What greater tribute to him can be imagined than that

paid by the great tragedian John Kemble, who watching him from the wings one night exclaimed: "My sister (Mrs. Siddons) never did anything finer in her life than that man is doing now in his way." Let another Grimaldi show himself and if he be allowed to have his chance the harlequinade will be born again.

I am under the impression that nursery stories and fairy tales, as themes for pantomime treatment, were not used until after Grimaldi had passed away. One thing is certain; they were made immensely popular by that versatile genius E. L. Blanchard, who for many years was identified with "Drury Lane" on Boxing nights. How many pantomimes he wrote it would be hard to say.

In conclusion I would say, that in my judgment the English taste in regard to amusements is too firmly fixed in the English character to be destroyed by passing fashions. It has a way of harking back to original instincts. The amazing success of the revival of "The Beggar's Opera," which most theatrical managers ten years ago would have sworn was as dead as a doornail, is a case in point. Some thirty years ago Clement Scott wrote: "Pantomime, though an exotic, has evidently taken deep root in the United Kingdom, and the peculiar humours of the clown—a figure of essentially British origin—will probably serve to extend its lease of life for an indefinite period." Mr. Scott says that out of every fifty theatres in the country at that time, forty-nine were playing pantomime. Many novelties in the theatrical world have come and gone since then, but few have become permanent features of stage representation. The so-called "legitimate" drama

hasn't been ousted. Shakespeare doesn't spell bankruptcy, as F. B. Chatterton thought it did because it failed with him; and the pantomime will not become a thing of the past, in spite of superior people. It can wait its time. That in some shape or form it will revive and fulfil its destiny as a thoroughly English humorous entertainment, I believe is certain.

CHAPTER XIX

The films. A new experience. The humours of rehearsals. Chasing a hat. An embarrassing encounter with bees. How "little Nell" was buried. Blowing up "old Peggotty." The "Starting Point." A glance back at a life's work.

On my return from America in 1913 I had an opportunity of exploiting myself on the "movies." Nothing could have presented a greater contrast to what I had been accustomed to than posing in front of the cinematograph camera. It was as far as the poles are asunder from circus and pantomime clowning. One had to get used to performing without the stimulus of an audience. A rehearsal for a film picture is totally different from a rehearsal on the stage. If anything is imperfect, or goes wrong with the latter, it is of no very great consequence. To go back and try once more is easy enough. But with the camera—dear me, no. The repetition of a series of photographs involves a good deal of trouble and stage direction.

But that which I found essentially unfamiliar

was the necessity of adapting oneself to the situation and surroundings and the calling up of the suitable facial expression to the satisfaction of the producer. In my harlequinade scenes, as I have already mentioned, I was left entirely to myself, and I worked everything out on my own responsibility, but for the cinematograph all had to be in accordance with the ideas of the producer. But as my "business" was to be comic, and as all my life I had been pantomiming in some shape or form, the thing came to me easily enough, especially in humorous scenes.

I am bound to say, however, that occasionally incidents unexpectedly happened during rehearsals which to me were funnier than those which subsequently appeared on the screen. I remember during my engagement with Hepworth's an unrehearsed episode occurred, which caused no end of amusement not only to me but to others, save the old gentleman who was the cause of the laugh. The thing occurred at the studios at Walton-on-Thames. My instructions were to walk down the main street and at a given moment to permit my straw hat to be blown off by a convenient wind, supplied by means of a carpet thread attached to the brim and pulled by an unseen person.

I believe Sir Herbert Tree once set down a piece of advice, among other gems of wisdom in his commonplace book, which ran: "If your hat blows off don't trouble to run after it; somebody is certain to do it for you." I found the last half of this "tip" to be perfectly true, but unfortunately the "business" of the part I was playing made it essential that *I* should run and

make a great pother over doing it. The hat went off properly and skidded along the street with me in full cry after it. My predicament and apparent distress at once excited the pity of a gentleman who, out of the kindness of his heart, dropped the portmanteau he was carrying and started to assist me, not seeing the camera on the watch, and probably not understanding if he did see it.

Of course the scene was within an ace of being spoilt and I yelled to him to get away. Thinking no doubt that I was a fool to reject his help, he kept on running, though he must have wondered where the miraculous wind came from, for there was not a breath of air stirring. At last I overtook the kind gentleman and we had a few words, which were not of the most kindly nature, and indeed we might have come to blows had not the producer appeared on the scene and explained what was being done. Then I shook hands with my would-be friend, he departed to look after his portmanteau, and the photographs were taken over again.

This really was my first attempt for the "pictures" and the mishap did not seem to me to be very encouraging. However, the film was a big success and meant for me a six months' engagement. During that six months I played many varied parts, one of the oddest being the impersonation of one of the "Tiller Girls." There were three of us, Alma Taylor, Chrissy White and myself. I was told that I made a lovely girl. On this point I have no opinion, but I'm quite certain that we had great fun.

Another droll rehearsal incident was that in which a hive full of bees figured. This hive was necessary to the plot of a little play in which I was supposed to be the uncle of a schoolboy who was spending his holidays at my country house. In the course of his rambles the boy strolls into a wood and chances to overhear a couple of fellows concocting a plan to break into my house, kidnap my nephew the schoolboy and keep him until he is ransomed. The boy, one of the precocious, ingenious urchins only to be met with on films, is ready with a counter plot. What could be simpler and more effective than to place a beehive each side of the window which the kidnappers were sure to select, and connect the hives with a rope which would not be seen. The fellows had only to catch their feet in the rope, which of course they would be obliging enough to do, the hives would be upset, and the bees would attack the intruders and sting them to death or thereabouts.

The drawback to the preparation was that the film management had no bees. However, a bee keeper was found in the neighbourhood, and he not only agreed to let his hives but he would also instruct us how to handle the bees, which after all was the main point. A river separated the beekeeper's place from the spot where we were rehearsing, and a boat was hired to bring the hives across. Five of us were commissioned for the job and we were conducted by the owner to where he kept his bees. Noticing one or two of the party hanging back the beekeeper remarked :

"There's nothing to be frightened about. You've only got to be quiet and not disturb them. They won't hurt you."

But somehow the man's preparations did not reassure us. He had crape over his face and long gloves which came a considerable distance up his arms. He was proceeding with his instructions how to handle bees when the walking stick on which one of the party was leaning slipped; he overbalanced himself upon a hive and out came a swarm of infuriated insects. We stood not upon the order of going, but took to our heels helter skelter. I scooted across the fields, the bees after me, but reached the boat in safety, jumped in and crossed the river without a sting. The others were not so fortunate, and as among them were the two rascally kidnappers, everybody said it served them right.

I think the funniest bit of unrehearsed comedy was that which came about in the production of Dickens' "Old Curiosity Shop," in which I played the part of the single gentleman who took apartments in Sampson Brass's house in Bevis Marks, and was the cause of so much solicitude on the part of the rascally attorney and his masculine sister, Sally.

The funeral of little Nell was to be a scene of intense pathos and realism. Four supers were engaged to carry the coffin to its burial place in the woods, and a clump of high trees about fifty yards from where the cortege was to start was selected as an ideal spot. The procession started with due solemnity, the bearers' heads and shoulders being concealed beneath the pall

in the orthodox fashion. It was noticed that the coffin was not carried perfectly level, but had a tendency to droop at one corner. However, no one troubled, and as the funeral cortege proceeded along the road everything was done with such decorum and realistic effect that the passers-by doffed their hats, as also did the drivers of various vehicles.

Suddenly came a horrifying catastrophe. The cause of the depression of the coffin was due to one of the bearers being shorter than his companions, and either in his efforts to keep the coffin level or that the pall got in his way and prevented him seeing where he was going, he caught his foot in the root of a tree, and down he went and the coffin followed! Consternation and horror were written in the faces of the bystanders and they rushed to the scene of the catastrophe, expecting to see the coffin smashed and the corpse ejected. They certainly saw the first, but not the second, for of course the body was bogus. So what began in solemnity ended in merriment. For all that I'm quite sure that those who had paid such respect to the supposed dead were a little annoyed to think how they had been "spoofed."

Another instance of what was intended to be serious working out in the opposite direction occurred when I was playing old Peggotty in "David Copperfield." The boatman's hut on the beach was, as readers of the novel will remember, at Yarmouth, but the producers of the film found it more convenient to transfer the scene to Whitstable, and to Whitstable accordingly I went with the other actors in the adaptation.

Meanwhile the producer had made arrangements with some shipping agents to provide him with the hull of a fishing smack which was turned upside down on the beach to do duty for Peggotty's dwelling place. A door and a window were put in and the interior was furnished with an American stove with a chimney pipe, from which it was intended a cloud of smoke should issue to suggest the proper homely effect.

We artistes arrived on the spot and hundreds of people gathered round, gaping with eagerness to see the show and wondering what it was all about. As a matter of fact we hadn't much to do, the chief actors being an old sailor and a boy, who were to engineer the smoke with the assistance of sawdust and wood and a bucket of petroleum. My part in the scene was to drag some fishing nets from the back of the boat to the door and enter the hut, where I was supposed to be awaiting the arrival of my adopted son Ham. In the meantime the producer had given instructions to the old sailor that directly he heard a whistle he was to light the stove.

I entered the hut, closed the door, the whistle sounded and the old chap started to light the fire. For some reason the fire refused to burn in the way it was wanted and after the lapse of a few minutes we heard the producer outside calling for more smoke—black smoke. The blackness was very important for the camera to obtain the proper effect. "All right, guv'nor," grunted the sailorman, "leave it to me." The producer did leave it, went away and in due time blew his whistle. I was sitting on a chair not far from the

American stove, which was nearly red hot. "There goes the whistle, my lad," said I, and the next minute—well, the whistle was not the only thing that was blown. Somebody as usual had blundered, and amid a loud explosion and clouds of smoke black enough to satisfy the most exacting producer we were scattered goodness knows where!

The fact was that fool of a man had poured the petroleum into the red hot stove and the result was chaos. I can't say I remember exactly what happened. I fancy I was too thankful I was still alive to think of anything else. But there's a funny side to everything and I shan't soon forget the picture of the scared sailorman fingering his hair and beard, or rather what remained of them. Both were frizzled to a frazzle. I should like to have heard the remarks of his wife when she set eyes upon him. At the same time it was a mercy he got off with nothing worse than the spoiling of his locks. The next day the thing had to be gone over again, barring the explosion, and this time all went well.

Another episode which happened in the filming of "David Copperfield" was quite as unexpected and even more embarrassing. The producer wanted a wreck for the final scene where Micawber, Peggotty and others leave England for Australia. He negotiated with the harbour of a south coast port to furnish him with a wreck, and accordingly in a few weeks' time the wreck in the shape of a schooner was forthcoming. She was lying some two miles distant from the pier, and the producer bargained with the captain of a tug to take us out.

The skipper agreed to do so for £5. We were taken to the wreck, which we boarded, and we were all so engrossed in our work that we did not notice that the tug had sheered off and left us to our fate.

The tide was coming in, the swell had its effect on the wreck and on the ladies of the company. The situation began to be unpleasant. We could see the tug in the distance and had we known how to send out a S.O.S. most certainly the skipper of the tug would have had one. Just when we were about to realise the shipwreck feeling in sober earnest, the tug condescended to come alongside, and then we made the discovery that her captain wanted another £5 to take us ashore. There was no alternative to submitting to the extortion, and no doubt the producer registered a vow that the next time he hired a tug he would make sure that the money paid meant "there and back."

A droll experience was that when I and several other film artistes were engaged in a film production in which we had to appear as old time mountebanks and barnstormers. A farmer was found who agreed to let us have a cow shed which we proposed to turn into a mumming booth. He shifted his cows and young bulls from their quarters in the shed and our carpenter got to work and transformed the place to make it suit our requirements. I had to play the part of a tragedian of the old school, silk hat, fur collar and cuffs, and my duty was to perform on the drum outside the supposed show. The moment came when all was in readiness for the film to be taken. I started on the drum and had

not banged it as hard as I could half a dozen times when the cattle came on at a run with the evident intention of going for us. The farmer's son, who was looking on at the show, yelled out that we'd better take cover, and take cover we did by hopping over the hedge into the next field. I rather fancy I headed the procession, but the drum was left behind. It turned out that among the cattle was a young bull who was a most aggressive beast where music (?) was concerned. Whether he recognised in my performance on the drum the tune a certain cow in remote times is said to have died of and wished to avenge his deceased ancestress I can't say, but it was a very narrow squeak.

The "Starting Point," produced by the British Lion Co., had a breezy nautical touch about it. The part assigned me was that of a retired old sailor who invests his savings in the purchase of a fishing smack. The smack goes down together with the old chap's partner and life-long friend. The old sailor is ruined and has to commence life again in a very humble way. The story has a happy ending, but I need not go into that. The drama was a very striking one and the film had a great success. Films in which I have played have been, among others, those of the Gaumont Co. ("The Fordington Twins") and of the France Atlantic Co. Altogether my film work was an interesting and novel experience.

I have now arrived at the end of my tale, in the telling of which I have tried to "nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice." I am conscious that my narrative in parts is somewhat fragmentary and disjointed, but unfortunately

this is unavoidable. As I have already had occasion to point out, I have had to depend entirely on my memory. Notes and memoranda, playbills, contracts, letters and many other documents which would have been extremely helpful to me in compiling these reminiscences were destroyed in the fire which took place in Drury Lane Theatre some years ago.

All I can say is that while the task of digging into the past has been somewhat toilsome and not without pain, reviving as it has memories of so many dear friends associated with me professionally who have passed away, it has had its compensations. I recall the many thousands of happy faces, the merry laughter of tens of thousands of children, which during a lengthy experience all over the world it has been my good fortune to see and hear. I may perhaps be pardoned if I add that I feel no small gratification in thinking that *I* was the cause of the happy faces, that it was *I* at whom the boys and girls were laughing. Maybe—and I certainly hope it has been so—I have for a few minutes, time and again, brought brightness into the lives of others. I think it is Thackeray who says somewhere, "A good laugh is sunshine in the house." It is so certainly in the theatre, not only to those in front of the footlights but also to those behind.

The calling of the clown is to some superior people not very dignified. Superior people need not bother. The clown is well able to take care of himself. It is his mission to make people merry, and merriment, I take it, is better than dullness, better than dignity—often another name for

bumptiousness. "Your merry heart goes all the day, your sad heart tires 'a mile 'a." Shakespeare is right!

THE END

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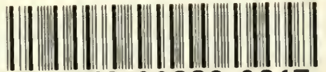
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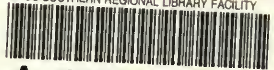
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